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MEMOIRS OF SISTER
OF MERCY KÉRUEL

M. A. M.

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MEMOIRS OF
SISTER MARY OF MERCY
KÉRUEL



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MEMOIRS OF
SISTER MARY OF MERCY
KÉRUEL

RELIGIOUS OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY
OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

1880-1910

*Taken from the French Life
published at Angers, 1913*

BY

M. A. M.

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SISTER MARY OF MERCY KÉRUEL,
Religious of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd.

[Frontispiece.]

TO THEE,
O SACRED HEART OF JESUS,
BURNING WITH LOVE,
WE OFFER THESE MEMOIRS OF
A SOUL WHOSE NOBLE AMBITION ON
EARTH WAS
TO LOVE THEE MUCH, AND MAKE THEE MUCH LOVED.
DEIGN TO ACCEPT OUR
HOMAGE, AND POUR OUT INTO OUR SOULS
THE TREASURES OF LOVE AND HOLY GENEROSITY
WITH WHICH SHE WHO LONGED TO
IMITATE THY LIFE AS A
VICTIM IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
EVER STROVE TO REPAY THY
LOVE AND BENEFITS



PREFACE

“THE Lord,” says Lacordaire, “takes pleasure in gathering His flowers in the spring and His fruits in the autumn.” Sister Mary of Mercy Kérue! was still but a spring flower when she was culled by the Divine Master and borne by Him to the fair Garden of Paradise. All who knew her had formed high hopes for her future, so well suited did she seem to do fruitful work for God here on earth and so perfectly did she understand the beauty of her vocation and the means for carrying it out to the full. Nevertheless, she had hardly begun her religious life when, a few months after her Profession, she left all who loved her so dearly on earth, in order to be united to her Divine Spouse in Heaven. “God’s ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts.” (Cf. Is. lv. 9.) But will not God yet make use of this valiant religious, in whose heart He had implanted such great zeal, to do good to other souls?

It has seemed to those who knew her best that even after her death she would continue her mission

vi MEMOIRS OF SISTER MARY OF MERCY

of doing good : that the account of her short life, of her trials and graces, and the burning aspirations of her soul would interest and edify many, and, although she was not left long to devote herself to the work so dear to her heart, that she would incite others to do so in her place. She who understood so well how to unite the active life with the contemplative will teach by her example how the interior life can and ought always to go hand in hand with that of external devotedness to work, and how the exercises that refer immediately to God ought to be as much loved as the duties in which we spend our lives for Him. . . . May Sister Mary of Mercy, whose beautiful soul we have the firm confidence is now enjoying in Heaven a life of union with her Divine Spouse, pray for those still struggling on earth. May she obtain the grace that the lights she received from on high may enlighten many other souls, and thus increase the number of hearts burning like hers with love and zeal.

AUGUSTUS SAUDREAU,

Priest.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
1. CHILDHOOD	I
2. GIRLHOOD	13
3. THE ORPHANS	28
4. FRIENDSHIP AND GOOD WORKS	34
5. SPIRITUAL LIFE	44
6. VOCATION	58
7. POSTULANTSHIP	82
8. NOVITIATE	108
9. NOVICE AND VICTIM	129
10. PROFESSED AND VICTIM	166

MEMOIRS OF SISTER MARY OF MERCY KÉRUEL

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

I

MARIE JULIETTE KÉRUEL was born at Saint Nazaire, in France, December 5, 1880, at 5 p.m., and was baptised the following day; the ceremonies of baptism, however, did not take place in the church until the feast of St. Francis de Sales. To the end of her life she celebrated the anniversary of that day with great devotion, and twenty-two years later she wrote of it as follows: "The good God has shown me to-day all the graces He had in store for the poor little baby I then was. Oh, that first visit to the Blessed Sacrament, how I wish I could make it again! But our Lord, to whom all things are present, had already taken possession of my heart and soul, though it was not till long afterwards that He revealed Himself as their proprietor."

2 MEMOIRS OF SISTER MARY OF MERCY

The little Juliette was welcomed by her parents, who had been married since May 11, 1878, as God's first blessing on their union.

Owing to delicate health her mother was obliged, to her great regret, to confide the child for its first year to the care of others. But when it returned to its own home, the little girl was watched over with unwearying affection by her father, mother, grandmother, and aunt, who never wearied of seeing her toddle about. She was a constant object of solicitude to her paternal grandmother, as well as her torment by her impetuosity.

One afternoon in particular there was a cry of alarm through the house—"Where is Juliette? Where can she have gone?—and in her little sabots too, she, only a babe of eighteen months old!"

Finding the door open, the child had slipped out without saying a word, trotted quietly down the street to the quay, where she calmly seated herself quite unconcernedly to watch the boats. There the reckless little creature was found after an hour's search. The joy with which she was welcomed home may be imagined. To perpetuate the memory of the escapade her mother lovingly preserved the little sabots, which long afterwards Juliette, in the spirit of sacrifice, put in the fire.

On August 9, 1884, another baby girl, Charlotte Léonie, was born. She, too, had to be put out to nurse until she was two years old. Meantime Juliette was increasing in years, but not in virtue, being of a very turbulent disposition. The child had a horror of being alone, and already her affectionate nature displayed itself in the way she clung to her mother, from whom henceforth she had never any secrets.

Full of vivacity, and always in motion, she loved games, and animals little and great, as well as flowers. Her delight was to spend her holidays in the country, especially with her maternal grandmother, of whom she was the spoiled darling, which she did not fail to appreciate. There was already a similarity between the grandmother and grandchild, which increased still more as Juliette's character strengthened.

Both were naturally drawn to what was ideal and beautiful: both were religiously inclined, devoted, open-hearted, and endowed with a glowing imagination which doubled their joys as well as their sorrows. Both were so lively, and so capable always of taking the lead, that no one could feel dull in their company. In fact, to know them was to love them.

In addition to these natural gifts, Juliette showed

4 MEMOIRS OF SISTER MARY OF MERCY

herself precociously clever in manual work, and her tiny hands could already use her needle most dexterously.

As the child grew up she was carefully watched over, and guarded from all the false impressions and dangers of the world by her prudent and devoted mother, whose wise guidance she greatly appreciated. In after years she wrote to her sister, reminding her of all they owed to their good mother, and her zealous watchfulness over them both.

Throughout her life she always thanked God for having preserved her from dangerous occasions and for having placed before her eyes the daily, living example of family virtues. Such lessons supply the want of many others, whereas nothing can replace them.

Juliette was recounting one day in later years, to some intimate friends, a punishment which had given her childish self-love a rude lesson in humility.

“ I had not the pleasure of knowing your early bringings up,” said the eldest of her listeners, “ but I can readily affirm it must have been excellent, judging by the results.” This double and wholly unexpected eulogium so took Juliette by surprise that she felt quite ashamed of having spoken.

“ All mother’s counsels come back to me to this

day," wrote Sister Mary of Mercy, during her novitiate; "she was certainly severe, and had something of a mistress of novices in her."

Mme. Kérue!el, in truth, required from her children respect and docility. She controlled their self-will, which was naturally strong, and found occasion even in the smallest things to make them practise obedience. At the same time she inspired them with a horror of falsehood, and to such good effect that straight-forwardness was one of the most striking features in Juliette's character.

This true mother well understood that the moral formation of her children was her own personal task. Occupied during the daytime with her husband in directing their business affairs, she nevertheless acquainted herself each evening with what had taken place during the day, giving blame or reward according to the circumstances. We have seen she knew how to punish, but we should never end were we to speak of all her motherly tenderness. . . . It was in this school that Juliette learned the great art of giving pleasure to others. Her mother was very ingenious in organising little family feasts, which remained deeply impressed in the minds of her children, and served to unite in their hearts the love of home and the love of religion. Every evening prayers were said in common, and,

6 MEMOIRS OF SISTER MARY OF MERCY

in the month of May, Mme. Kéruel and her two girls would sing hymns to Our Lady, whose statue they surrounded with lights and flowers.

Every year during the summer season the Kéruel family would gather together at a little property of theirs situated not far from the town, and only a few steps from the sea. Time passed quickly at Pomponnette, and Juliette used thoroughly to enjoy the life there.

The hours of work were varied with gardening, fishing expeditions, and excursions, in which the buoyant, happy-hearted child always seemed to take the lead in the merry band.

When Juliette was about eleven years old she experienced her first sorrow in her separation from a beloved aunt who till then had formed part of the family, and had been like a second mother to the two young girls, but who now left them for a time to go and console one of her nephews who had just been left motherless.

It was to this aunt that the task of preparing Juliette for her first Communion had been confided. Very simply, earnestly, and with the trustful faith which so pleases our Lord, did the child prepare to receive her God, becoming more and more fervent and recollected as the great day drew nigh. In some notes she made at the time is to be found

the child-like and practical resolution, not to strike her sister any more, and rarely did she fail hereafter in the resolve. She was greatly delighted with a little book her aunt had given her, called *Jesus and the Child*; and with all her pure, ardent nature she implored our Lord to come and take possession of her soul. Certainly, from the day of her first Communion Jesus reigned without a rival in the heart of His "little victim."

II

The two sisters, in consequence of the departure of their aunt who had hitherto undertaken the care of their education, now entered the Convent of the Nativity as day boarders.

Juliette was at once won by the kindness of the religious, to whom she quickly became attached. She was pleased, too, with the regular life of the school, in spite of some humiliations her childish self-love had to undergo there. She held in particular horror certain fur shoes with wooden soles, which clattered on the pavement, and the serviettes in the refectory, to which were attached strings, as for very small children. Every week Juliette tore off the strings, only to find them replaced next week by fresh ones. At last her supplications prevailed, and the obnoxious strings were given up ;

but as time went on Juliette learned to put up with disagreeables without striving to remove their cause.

It cannot be said she was very fond of study. Mathematics and the sciences had but little attraction for her. She was more drawn to history and literature, but above all to religious instructions, in which she positively delighted. The child was chiefly noted for her gifts of soul and heart. "What struck me most in her," the convent chaplain wrote later, "and distinguished her, from the first, amongst her companions, was her piety, her recollection in chapel, the candour which shone in her face, reflecting that of her soul, and her humility; by that I mean the absence of self-consciousness and those little displays of vanity in word or look prompted by the desire of winning a flattering word, or at least of attracting attention. There was nothing of all that in Juliette. She always went straight to the point, and the uprightness of her judgment made her escape the pitfalls into which the young so often stumble."

According to the testimony of her mistresses, she was the model of a good spirit and a good temper. But with what care the religious, and especially the head mistress of the school, watched over and cultivated this soul, in which the good

seed truly produced a hundredfold ! Mother Mary of St. Gonzaga's name always remained linked in Juliette's mind with the formation of her moral character. One fundamental principle she strove to instil into her pupils was the love of duty : " Be women devoted to duty," she used to say to them unceasingly, in a tone of deep conviction.

No one better understood such words than Juliette, and consequently duty was always regarded by her as something sacred. " A model of submission to her mistresses," writes one of them, " Juliette was also full of affectionate charity towards her companions, and if ever she had anything to forgive, she did it with a generosity beyond her age. If she gave herself with ardour to her work, she threw herself into the games with equal spirit, and though so lively was always at the same time good tempered."

Her character, which had been trained to submission, and her refined mind made her pliable to the requirements of rule. The vivacity of her nature showed out more strongly at home, where her mother was more strict and required an absolute submission, pardoning no fault until reparation was made.

Juliette's sister was often a witness to the struggle that went on before she could make up her mind

to ask pardon,—an ordeal she would occasionally postpone for a time. One night it happened she could not sleep for remorse, the result being that a little white figure appeared trembling at the bedside of her mother, whom she wakened with the murmured words, “Forgive me, mother dear.”

Needless to say, forgiveness was most affectionately granted. The mother and child thoroughly understood each other, and were closely united by a similarity of character as well as the tenderest ties, which were later to be strengthened by sorrow.

The first Communion day of her sister Charlotte, whom Juliette herself had helped to prepare, was a great day for the Kérue! family. It took place on May 25, 1895, the happy parents of the first communicants filling the convent chapel. The family feast which closed the day seemed also to close the happy period of Juliette’s childhood. Shortly afterwards, family losses and physical and moral suffering overshadowed her life, at the same time ripening her soul, so that at the age of fourteen she seemed almost a woman by the earnestness of her character and the sterling qualities of her heart.

At the end of the vacation, the last the family spent all together at Pomponnette, Mme. Kérue! was informed of the approaching departure of

the religious who directed the Convent School at Saint Nazaire. This sudden news was a great blow to Juliette, who ran to throw herself for the last time into the arms of her dear mistresses who were about to leave, bearing with them the regrets and childlike gratitude of the young girl who loved them with all the ardour of her fifteen years.

A few days later the two sisters were placed under the care of the Dominicanesses,—the new directors of the establishment. “I detest you!” was Juliette’s greeting under the impulse of the moment, which she ever after regretted.

“All her conduct in our regard,” says the good Mother Prioress, who received this outburst, “all the delicate attentions which Juliette afterwards lavished on the newcomers, were her reparation for her inconsiderate speech, which we, indeed, had forgotten, thinking it quite excusable, owing to the poor child’s state of grief.” These lines well betray the motherly love of her who was later to give Juliette so large a place in her heart.

But during the months which followed she tried in vain, by her affectionate solicitude, to win the confidence of her pupil, who applied herself to her studies more with resignation than zest. Her health began to suffer from the strain she

put on herself to drive from her mind the memories of the past. Also, the first symptoms of the hip disease which later declared itself prevented her applying herself closely to study. So Juliette was taken from school on account of her own health, but soon became the nurse of her cherished mother, whose increasing weakness was causing much anxiety to her family.

How was it that Juliette, so young and delicate, was able to fulfil to the admiration of everyone, for two years, a task usually reserved for the strong and experienced? Two words give the secret of her devotedness,—Divine love and filial love.

CHAPTER II

GIRLHOOD

I

MME. KÉRUEL had received about this time a great shock in the recent death of one of her sisters. In bad health herself, she needed now, not only care, but distraction. For this end the doctor prescribed a season at Cauterets, so accordingly she set out on June 14, 1896, accompanied by her husband and eldest daughter.

The waters did not cure the invalid, but Juliette's first long journey left indelible memories on the mind of the enthusiastic girl of sixteen. She had scarcely arrived before she wrote to her sister : " How far away we are from you, my little Lottie ! Can you really believe we are in the Pyrenees ? I feel I am in a dream, but it is a very pleasant one ; for the view of the mountains is beautiful, more than beautiful, and the impression they make on one is quite indescribable.

" From our windows we can see the famous

peak of Vignemal. Look on your map, and you will find it. The summit is covered with snow, and down its sides flow torrents which, meeting in the valley, form the Gave. On all sides there are precipices, torrents, and cascades, making a tumultuous sound, in the midst of which one can distinguish the sweet singing of the nightingale. In listening to it I seem to hear you, my Lottie, and regard it as your little messenger."

Juliette forgot but one thing, and that was to speak of her health. Her father, knowing how anxious those at home would be, supplied this deficiency, telling them, with much joy, of the doctor's reassuring opinion, who, after examining her, pronounced the case to be one of acute arthritis, which he promised to cure by a course of treatment.

Juliette, therefore, easily obtained permission for donkey-rides. "They know their way about much better than those at Baule," she exclaimed, referring to the races of former days in a pine wood, where her mount frequently landed her into difficulties. But, in spite of the doctor's optimism, the hip complaint still clung to her, and so, *nolens volens*, she had to resign herself to walking as little as possible,—a great trial to so active a nature.

The travellers soon began to find the life wear-

some. Mme. Kérue! was no better, and Juliette could scarcely stir out of doors.

“If you only knew, dear Lottie,” she wrote, “how painful it is to see our friends setting out so full of merriment, and we obliged to remain prisoners. But to make up for all the walks we are missing, the doctor is going to recommence to-morrow the delightful cauterising treatment. The very thought of it makes one tremble, for it is terrible. Yes, it is really a red-hot iron passed over the skin, after which there is a frightful odour of frizzled flesh. It makes us think of poor St. Laurence. He well deserved to get to Heaven!”

Towards the end of July, the treatment being finished, though without any appreciable results, the travellers set out for Lourdes. There, at least, the two sufferers found in prayer to Mary Immaculate the spiritual help they so much needed.

Juliette poured out her heart in prayer for her beloved mother. However, it was not this temporal cure Our Lady was about to grant her, but rather the solid conversion of her dear father, and his return to the practise of his religious duties, which were his sole consolation in the dark days that were before him.

As Juliette prayed for her mother, so in her

turn did that devoted mother pray for the restoration to health of her daughter, who was suffering more and more from her hip. One evening, when the devout girl lingered long in the Church of the Rosary, her parents believed their prayers had been heard, and that Our Lady had cured their child. Nor were they alone in this belief. A pilgrim, who had joined them at Lourdes, and whom they could already call a friend, as they had been together for three weeks at Cauterets, also felt convinced that the deep faith of Juliette would receive its reward from our Immaculate Mother. He was right in thinking so, but in what form was the favour accorded ?

In his humility, this friend of short-standing little suspected that he himself, with his constant fidelity, the example of virtue he gave in his old age, his affectionate devotedness, was the gift Our Lady wished to bestow on this sorely-tried family, the benefit of which the two sisters were soon to appreciate to the full. Nor did passing years lessen this touching solicitude. The trials of the two orphans served only to render it still more devoted.

Scarcely had the family returned to Saint Nazaire than Mme. Kéruef was ordered to Nantes with her two daughters, the doctors hoping that

a prolonged stay there would check the lung disease that now openly declared itself. Nothing but the hope of a cure could nerve this devoted wife and mother to face all the suffering involved in this separation from so much she held dear ; and, in spite of her efforts to be brave, she nearly broke down completely on leaving her home, to which she was attached by so many ties, and which she had an inward conviction she would never see again.

II

We have now before us a touching picture of the two invalids tending each other, and striving mutually to keep up their courage by their brightness and energy. But the most vigilant care was powerless to restore one whose malady was soon declared incurable. Juliette, with a smile ever on her lips, nursed to the end her beloved mother, who more and more leaned on her daughter, claiming her exclusive care, and, reversing their positions, gave her the confidence of a child to its mother. No one was more worthy of it than this young girl—I had almost said this valiant woman,—whose will and faith, constantly strengthened by sacrifice and prayer, never wavered nor faltered in the path of duty.

Some weeks after being installed at Nantes a sad trial befell poor Juliette: the doctor informing her that he would have to encase her in some apparatus, which was the only chance for curing her hip.

"The appliance for our little girl has been here since yesterday morning," wrote her mother on October 2, 1896. "You may imagine what we felt when the lugubrious package arrived! Nevertheless, we are doing violence to ourselves; and Juliette, to whom it is a great trial, is accustoming herself to the sight of it. But how will she, so bright and active, ever be able to keep quiet like that?"

The enforced seclusion lasted four months and a half, during which, contrary to all expectations, the sick girl preserved an unalterable cheerfulness, which was very necessary to sustain her mother's courage.

During this time of trial Juliette's spiritual life became transformed. She applied herself assiduously to the practice of the interior life, which later became so intense in her.

The perusal of the lives of the saints was a great resource and help to her at this time. That of St. Francis of Assisi came quite as a revelation, and won her enthusiastic admiration. He was a model

that she studied unwearingly. He personified her ideal of love and penance.

Meanwhile the brave girl kept up a constant correspondence with her father, who was unable to be with them continuously, cheering him with every little amelioration in her mother's state and by her own filial affection.

On February 10 she was able to tell him the good news that she was at last free from her apparatus; and some days later she wrote: "This is from your daughter, who can walk at last! That is, she learned to do so yesterday, leaning on the arm of our good doctor, and supported by my dear crutches, for without them I should be unable to stand. It seems to me as if I had been born again!"

Her strength gradually returned day by day, and was devoted entirely to her dear invalid mother, who left to her the entire management of their little establishment, and who testified with maternal pride to Juliette's aptitude in filling the rôle of mistress of the house.

The difficult circumstances in which the young girl was placed helped to form her moral character and developed her powers of government. Her total self-forgetfulness, sound judgment, promptitude in decision, and energetic will were accentuated

by a slight tinge of Bréton tenacity. Already she exercised quite unconsciously, and with charming simplicity, an ascendancy over all around her which none sought to escape.

When in the July of 1897 the doctors, admitting the futility of their treatment, recommended a season at Mont Doré for Mme. Kérue!l, her husband felt he could not select a better nurse than his eldest daughter. He might have been able to find a more experienced one, but certainly none more devoted.

“Be sure, dearest father,” she wrote, “that I will do my utmost to respond to the great confidence you place in me, by surrounding mother with all possible care and affection. May this year bring us some of our former happiness, and let us see the cure of our cherished mother, the greatest treasure you, dear father, could entrust to me.”

In a postscript to this letter her mother added : “Juliette wins the sympathy of everyone here. She has so much sense, and all are struck by the care and attention she lavishes on me. She herself often suffers from her hip, though she says nothing ; but I can see it.”

The satisfaction of knowing she was doing her duty was the only one Juliette had at this time. The weight of responsibility was heavy, and the

separation from the rest of the family all the harder, because the doctor told her privately there was absolutely no hope, though he left the invalid herself in ignorance of this. Juliette never left her, except for daily Mass in a neighbouring church. Divine love and filial affection were now more than ever her life. "I am very happy alone here with mother," she wrote; "for she is now everything to me."

After her return to Nantes, Mme. Kérue! waited in vain for the improvement she hoped for. In November she took to her bed, to rise no more. On December 29 she received the Last Sacraments with calm resignation, though the end was not thought to be very near. But a few hours later a change came over her; and in the evening, with her husband and daughter praying by her, she peacefully expired.

It was a sad return to Saint Nazaire, where, for the first time since August 26, the father, aunt, and two daughters found themselves together once more. Juliette felt her mother's loss keenly, but strove to be brave and cheerful for the sake of others.

Nevertheless, she could not always keep up, and at such times it was her sister's turn to console her, who said, even years after, that Juliette had

never seemed to be wholly on earth since the terrible trial of her mother's death ; and she herself owns to much the same in one of her notes, where she writes : " I do not speak of mother as often as I should like. I long to say how much I miss her. Oh, it is dreadful to have no mother, especially when her child loved her beyond all else ! How I should love to say ' Mother dear ' once more ! " And again later she says : " I feel a great void in my soul, and discouragement is knocking at the door of my heart. But I determined yesterday that it should find no entrance. Prayer is my defence. How sad, how very sad life is in itself ! Separations always, the pain of seeing others suffer, fears for the future, and the bearing with oneself ! But the Heart of Jesus shall henceforth be my refuge, and Holy Communion is my sweetest happiness."

III

Active and courageous as ever, Juliette, helped by her aunt, took up the management of the house, finding in external employment a distraction in her grief. She began each day by hearing Holy Mass. Her good father, little given to early rising, found her, when he came to breakfast, already at work, and said to her one day he thought she got up too

early. "Father," she replied gently but firmly, "do not prevent my going to Mass, for I shall be sensible and steady if united with the good God, but foolish and frivolous without Him." Henceforth she had full liberty for her morning expeditions.

Without her ever mentioning her projects for the future, her father himself was the first to broach the subject, going even so far as to say that life would be quite unbearable to him if she entered a convent. Very adroitly she gave a cheerful turn to the conversation, and in the end won all to her own views.

When meditating on the lives of the saints Juliette could not fail to observe the influence their surroundings exercised on their souls. She therefore arranged her own room in harmony with her spiritual life,—that simple Bréton chamber, the austere style of which was now doubly pleasing to her. Pitilessly excluding all frivolous superfluities, she placed beside the revered picture of her parents the little pious souvenirs of her childhood, and near the statue of Our Lady the sweet figure of St. Francis of Assisi, her beloved protector.

Often did she kneel on her carved oak prie-Dieu (made in Brittany) before the picture of the holy face of Jesus. There she gained strength and hope,

and learned how to sanctify by a generous offering the labours of the day.

After spending some time in needlework she greeted with joy the hour for reading. Rarely did she indulge in worldly literature, but preferred serious periodicals which gave solid food to her mind and checked the play of her vivid imagination. For spiritual reading, next to the Holy Scriptures, her favourite books were the works of such masters of the spiritual life as St. Francis de Sales, Bossuet, and Father Faber ; also *The Liturgical Year*, *The Lives of the Saints*, and finally the book which later exercised such a decisive influence on her life, *The Life of Sister Mary of the Divine Heart*.

From what has been said above, we see that Juliette was not only a living example of every domestic virtue, but was the joy of all around her by her frank good humour and winning ways, which naturally gained all hearts.

Side by side with her earnestness of character, Juliette possessed a fund of buoyant cheerfulness, which neither heart-rending sorrows nor physical suffering could repress.

Travelling, or whatever involved movement, delighted her active nature, and she reckoned nothing a trouble when planning and arranging for a journey.

Thus it was a great joy to her when, in 1898, one of her aunts took her for a time to Normandy, where her relatives surrounded her with a thousand delicate and affectionate attentions ; after which she, for the first time, accompanied her father to Paris, who, while he was engaged in business matters, confided her to the care of their old friend M. D., who had kept up an affectionate intercourse with them since they were together at Lourdes.

To him it was a pleasure to introduce the young girl to the beauties of the French capital. Juliette's cultivated mind greatly appreciated the visits to the museums, the art galleries, etc. But Paris, that city of artistic treasures, has in reserve for those who pray in her sanctuaries treasures of another nature, and it was in these the girl most rejoiced. She brought back from this visit a host of memories, with which she amused the home circle on her return.

A stay in Brittany a little later made an equally strong impression on her mind. Indeed, she always preferred a visit there to anywhere else. A friend who took the two sisters on a pilgrimage to Saint Anne d'Auray in 1903 wrote : " Juliette again finds herself thoroughly at home here. The solid faith and strong devotion to St. Anne are quite her own. How often she has said that the ' Grandmother of the Brétons ' could refuse her nothing."

The beauties of nature had a special attraction for Juliette's spiritual mind. Whatever was pleasing to the sight raised her thoughts to God, "the first author of all beauty," whom she saw and admired in even the smallest things.

Since her attack of hip disease, Juliette always remained delicate, and the anæmia from which she suffered was a constant source of anxiety to her father. In 1899 M. Kérue!l, thinking that a season amongst the pine woods would strengthen his daughter, took a house for a time at Pornichet. During her restful stay there, Juliette enjoyed a peace and joy she had not known for some years, though she also found many occasions for sacrifice ; many things that she naturally delighted in when near the sea were to her forbidden fruit, in which she could not indulge, owing to her delicate state of health, without paying too dearly for it.

When the family returned to Saint Nazaire towards the middle of September, the two sisters were far from thinking that in three weeks' time they would be orphans.

On his way to Havre, where he took a rest with his family after the fatigue of his annual visit to Paris, M. Kérue!l had a seizure which carried him off in a few minutes, on October 12, the day fixed for his return. Impossible to describe the grief of

those of his family who were with him, and who, seeing he was dying, exhorted him to confidence and contrition, holding the crucifix before his already failing sight, and receiving with his final recommendations his last sigh, which he breathed forth whilst murmuring the words : “ Forgive me, my God.”

Henceforth their aunt, whose maternal tenderness was their greatest comfort in this fresh bereavement, was to supply the place of both parents to the now orphan girls.

Under this fresh blow Juliette’s health quite broke down ; but with her usual courage it was she who upheld the others by her spirit of faith, which made her look beyond the shadows of death to the eternal home to which their dear ones had gone before them.

CHAPTER III

THE ORPHANS

THE years that followed her father's death Juliette devoted to the care of her younger sister, who was then sixteen,—a somewhat difficult age, when a girl emerges from childhood. “I want to be as a little mother to Charlotte,” she wrote; “and I truly love her with a maternal love, jealous for her real good.” With her spirit of penetration, and ever watchful solicitude, she had no difficulty in gaining her sister's full confidence. Winning and persuasive, kind yet firm, she made virtue a matter of such rigorous obligation, was so unsparing of laziness or softness, drew her on so steadily to better and still better things, that henceforth she acquired so great an influence over the young girl that she used to say laughingly she could get her to do anything she liked.

Charlotte gave herself up all the more willingly to this influence, because she clearly understood its full value.

“How I thank God,” she said later, “to have had such an example before my eyes for six whole years. Nor were they years of a quiet, peaceful existence, but strewn with many trials, during which I never once saw her lay down her arms, giving me an example I could not but imitate. Nothing will ever efface from my mind the memory of her faith, her indomitable energy, her charity. . . . Morally, too, I felt her close to me, surrounding me always with her loving affection. How good it is to have a sister one loves as oneself, who is better than oneself, and of whose tender affection one feels sure. So great and delightful was our intimacy that in speaking of Juliette I could say: ‘With her I am never lonely, and we two are but one.’ ”

Nevertheless, Charlotte could not enjoy this legitimate happiness without some apprehension. The confidences of her elder sister made her suspect that her heart belonged to God alone, and that it was her sisterly devotedness only that kept her in the world.

Thus she was in no way surprised when in 1904 Juliette told her she intended entering the convent of Poor Clares at Rennes.

In spite of having been thus foreseen, the separation was none the less very painful on both sides.

On the eve of her departure, Juliette, at her sister’s

request, penned the following lines (a veritable testament), in which she poured forth her loving and generous soul :

“ MY DEAR ONE,—The good God has already asked many sacrifices of us, but, in spite of sorrows and separation from those we loved, we remained together. I had become your little mother, and loved you as that which is dearest to me in the world.

“ I felt, nevertheless, that this love would have to be, not ended, but retrenched, and I trembled when I heard in the depths of my heart the Master’s call. How shall I ever be able to leave my little Lottie, I thought to myself. Yet the call became still stronger, and there was no resisting it ; so I must go ! This means a host of sacrifices, each more painful than the other.

“ You see, dearie, thus to separate myself voluntarily from you has filled my heart with unspeakable grief. It was such a happiness to love and trust one another as we did, and, if others caused us pain, to live together in peace under the eye of the good God. It would seem as if this should never have come to an end.

“ Well, you know and understand better than anyone how it is. I love you none the less, but I

must respond to what the Sacred Heart asks of me,—that Sacred Heart which will be your refuge when I am no longer with you. There you will find me again, and, since that devotion is your special one, you will find in that Divine Heart the strength you will daily require and the love of which your heart has need. If at times you feel you have no aim in life, remember that He seeks for generous souls; so labour and suffer always for Him. Consolation will quickly follow the trial, my darling; may you perfectly carry out your life of love of God and love of your neighbour.

“I confide you to Our Blessed Lady. Make a fresh consecration to her of your whole being, especially of your heart. I place you under the guardianship of your good angel and of father and mother. . . .

“Always go straight on your way, whatever happens. Love God as you go, and we shall meet again. Be sure I shall never forget, and shall always love you. Forgive me the pain I have often caused you.

“EVER IN THE SACRED HEART. . . .”

On August 25, feast of St. Louis, Juliette entered the Convent of Poor Clares. But a double trial awaited her on the threshold of the life to

which she felt she was called. Her health gave way, besides which she did not feel herself in her right element. The Mother Abbess did not fail to appreciate the merits of the postulant, who showed herself so apt in taking up the different employments given her that it was thought she must already have passed through a Novitiate. But it was soon evident that so active and expansive a nature was not made for the life of a Poor Clare.

Her sister Charlotte wrote : " On September 24, feast of Our Lady of Mercy, Juliette returned to us. But what a change in her ! Instead of the valiant young girl who had left us a month previously, we found her sad at heart, and worn out by the struggle ; so that witnessing her grief, we hardly dare speak of our happiness in having her with us once more."

We shall see later how God in His providence strengthened by fresh trials Juliette's religious vocation, reserving it to Himself to make known to her the way He wished her to follow.

At the beginning of the following year Juliette became seriously ill, her naturally delicate health, of which she herself never took any care, breaking down under the strain caused by the trials her soul was then passing through. The doctors, con-

sulted regarding her consumptive tendencies, did not give much hope. Least of all did the invalid herself expect to recover. The thought of her sister's loneliness, should she be taken, was a source of great anguish to her, and, believing her last hour at hand, after submitting with resignation to this final separation, she offered her life to God as a sacrifice for her sister's good.

Even before restoring the poor invalid to health, the good God responded to her childlike confidence. She was fond of saying that He was the Father of orphans; and Charlotte and a relative, Felix Kérue!l, had happy experience of this when they became engaged in February 19, 1906.

Her wishes being fulfilled even beyond her hopes, Juliette was full of gratitude, and wrote a few days later: "I prayed for Lottie, and now am perfectly happy. I cannot cease thanking the good God, who has given us so great a joy, just when we were least expecting it. Oh, how good it is to abandon oneself entirely to Him!" The marriage took place the following May.

CHAPTER IV

FRIENDSHIPS AND GOOD WORKS

“FRIENDSHIP,” says St. Augustine, “is, after God, the holiest thing we can desire ; the most difficult to find and the sweetest to enjoy.”

Juliette’s experiences on this point were very happy ones, as were all those in which her affections were concerned. Friendships held a large place in her short life.

For her, to live was to love ; she loved her own family circle, and later loved the larger family of which she made choice, or rather to which Providence guided her. She always gave, together with her friendship, the complete gift of herself, her ardour, her delicate attentions, and generosity. To give pleasure was her great aim ; to devote herself to others, and gratify their smallest desires, to console those in suffering, seemed a necessity to her loving heart.

Even her continued ill-health, which condemned Juliette to an inactive life, in no way made her

self-centred. Her room was the general rendezvous of her faithful friends, who were glad to make her the confidante of their joys and sorrows. To raise their courage she put forth all the vigour of her own soul. Her sound judgment and supernatural spirit gave her words real power over others, and were as those of a person of already ripe experience. Her joyousness, originality in conversation, simplicity, and frankness easily won the lasting sympathy and affection of others. Old persons were always specially drawn to Juliette, for with her deference and respect always went hand in hand, with tender sympathy and sound judgment. She was happy, too, when she met a heart throbbing like her own with love of things divine and thirsting to devote itself to such. God often gave her this holy joy, and many were the friends she found to help her in her good works. It would take too long to speak of them all, though we should love to recount the beneficial influence Juliette exercised over a soul sorely tried, though not crushed, by sorrows, and who desired to sanctify her sufferings by the practice of charity. Mutually encouraging each other, together they visited the poor, and instructed little children. There was a holy rivalry between them to procure the glory of the heart of Jesus, both being fired with the ambition of being its apostles.

Another friend, consumed like herself with zeal for God's glory and desire to propagate devotion to the Sacred Heart, was taken from her by death. They had become intimate through the work of catechising, *l'Œuvre des Catéchismes*, of which society Mathilde X. was the zealous president.

Their friendship was cemented by their both having a dislike for all worldliness and a great attraction for the poor, whom it was their greatest joy to visit and help, for which purpose they put in common their little savings, often the fruit of many sacrifices, such as the sale of jewelry, deprivation of little pleasures, etc. Juliette had learned in her own home to sympathise with those in sorrow, particularly orphans. "She could get whatever she liked from her father," writes one of her mistresses; "and I remember that one Christmas she coaxed from her excellent parents a quantity of clothing for the poor, which she triumphantly presented to our Mother Superior."

Her spirit of faith made her see our Lord in the poor. They were her best friends, whom she received as such when they came to the house, leaving everything to go to them; and her tact, delicacy, and the pious stratagems by which she contrived to come to their aid knew no bounds. But what they preferred even to her delicately

given alms were her kindly welcome, her smiling face, and that sense of equality that she always strove to establish between herself and those under obligation to her.

To old men and children she was particularly devoted, and how they loved her !

Amongst the sick she was most attracted to those attacked by tuberculosis. In memory of her mother she liked to tend these herself, and procure for them remedies and comforts, knowing by experience that the pleasure given by a little kind attention often does a patient more good than medicine.

She looked above all to gaining souls. If she heard of a hardened sinner, she prayed and strove by every means in her power to get him to confession, exhorting, pleading even, with such heart-felt accents that they could not fail to reach the heart, and repeating her visits until she had the assurance that God's Priest would be well received.

Physical and moral wounds, rags, ignorance, etc., never repelled, but rather attracted, her. Did she hear of an unbaptised baby in a negligent or irreligious family, she left no stone unturned to have the matter put right. Alas ! at Saint Nazaire it was not rare for a child to grow up unbaptised, nor was it always easy to make the parents under-

stand the gravity of their culpable neglect. She had a case of this kind on hand when she entered the Good Shepherd Novitiate; but even when behind the grille she could not forget the unfortunate babe. "Tell Charlotte," she wrote to her aunt, "that she absolutely must see to Marcel. I am tormented by the thought of that little one still a pagan. How I regret not having had it baptised last winter!"

Ever full of kindness towards all in need, Juliette was particularly so to the voluntary poor who have left all to follow Christ. Imbued as she was with the Franciscan spirit, she not only understood evangelical poverty, but venerated it, and sought as an honour the privilege of aiding it. The religious character inspired her with profound respect, and she felt as keenly as if it had been a personal insult,—the jeers and criticisms of a blind world which regards monastic life and contemptible weak-mindedness as synonymous.

How often Juliette expressed her regret at her inability to contribute more largely to the ornamentation and decoration of churches. Nothing could be too beautiful for our Lord in her eyes. She delighted in belonging to one of those societies of ladies and young girls so aptly called "The work of the Tabernacles." To this she always

turned the more willingly, because it involved her passing her afternoon hours near our Lord, and consecrating to Him that natural skilfulness and taste with which she was endowed and of which she always wished that Jesus should be the first to profit.

When she helped in preparing the reposoirs for the feast of Corpus Christi, no labour seemed long or painful. She always worked beyond her strength, and thought herself more than repaid when at the time of the procession she received our Lord's blessing from the throne she had prepared with so much love.

Do pious souls always sufficiently understand that a good book may be a more useful alms than a piece of bread ?

Juliette quite realised how much might be done by that modern application of the precept of charity, —the Apostolate of the Press. Giving herself wholeheartedly with her usual zest and ardour to the propagation of the Holy Gospels, she spread them broadcast.

Nor did she forget pious pictures, artistic or otherwise, and usually coloured, which are so welcomed by those who find themselves surrounded only by profane or even licentious subjects. Pictures of the Sacred Heart she distributed with

open hands, and used to promise to do so in large quantities when she wanted some important favour. Nor was our Lord slow in responding to the requests of His faithful apostle.

All her savings were barely sufficient to pay her accounts for books, and her horror of arithmetic made it sometimes difficult to balance her accounts. We have seen how her spirit of sacrifice came to her aid. As feasts and anniversaries came round, which were faithfully celebrated in the family, Juliette used to adroitly discourage her relations and friends from giving her presents, saying she was in need of nothing. Admiring the generosity of her who made herself poor for the sake of the poor, they would then oblige her to accept what she in turn had the happiness of giving away. . . .

Religious poverty was on more than one occasion a subject of very real renunciation later to Sister Mary of Mercy. Her family quite understood her feelings on the point. "My little Charlotte wants to know what would give me pleasure," she wrote before her Profession. "It is the 'pleasure of doing good' that I ask of you. That is what you, like myself, enjoy the most."

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We cannot close this little sketch of Juliette's friends and occupations before she entered religion

without referring to the affection she bore the Prioress of the Dominican Convent, where she was at school, and whom we have mentioned before. After the death of Mme. Kérue!l, Juliette often visited the convent where her sister was continuing her studies. She appreciated then the consolation of being able to give to the venerated superior, Mary de Chantal, the sweet name of mother. Her own mother's heart seemed to live again in that of the religious, between whom and the orphan girl an intimacy soon sprang up which was only severed by death.

"How well my mother understands me!" exclaimed the affectionate young girl, "and how she loves me!"

"In our spiritual conversations," wrote her confidante later, "Juliette poured out her soul, athirst for God and her own perfection. To make herself better known she turned her soul 'inside out,' to use her own expression. She showed herself eager to receive counsel fitted to enlighten her in her double task of eldest daughter and grown-up sister."

She felt all the more need for these outpourings, because when at home, where death had made such ravages, Juliette thought more of giving than receiving comfort and advice. There charity as

well as prudence made her often repress her own tastes and desires ; but with the good Mother Mary de Chantal she could give free vent to her aspirations and troubles ; and by thus satisfying her inward need of tender sympathy, fill in some measure the void her mother's death had left in her heart. This intimacy did much to strengthen and supernaturalise Juliette's character, and helped her in turn to draw upwards and onwards her many friends, her soul being cast in too strong a mould to be satisfied with purely human affection. " I feel how much our friendship needs supernaturalising," she wrote to one, " and I strive to raise it more and more above mere sensible emotion and external signs of affection. What I want is union with souls who work together ever more and more in union with God." Again, however, even this holy intimacy with Mother Mary de Chantal the good God thought fit to sever. Her illness and consequent removal from Saint Nazaire were a great blow to poor Juliette, who felt herself now doubly an orphan. In her notes she poured forth her grief at this fresh separation. " Now, there is an end to that intimacy which . . . made me truly her child. May I, at least, prove myself worthy of such a mother. . . . We were so dear to each other, and now we are separated by long miles, mountains,

and even frontiers. But beyond all those mountains I see a road mapped out by which we shall meet again,—the road of the Cross traced by the Master. May this fresh separation be to me henceforth a lesson of love. Yes, Lord, make me to love Thee."

CHAPTER V

SPIRITUAL LIFE

I. SUFFERINGS

WE have followed Juliette in her dealings with others and her devotedness to her family. We have also seen how her natural energy came to her aid when doing good to others.

As to what she was in her relations with God, were we to ask herself she would reply, as she once did in her frank humility: "There are souls who are very active about material things and very slothful in what regards God. I belong to this class."

But who else ever reproached Juliette with spiritual sloth? In the supernatural, even more than in the natural order, she disliked doing things by halves. "My God," she said, "I do not refuse to labour, but do Thou give me the grace necessary for it." Not only did she not refuse, but she accepted it resolutely, bravely even, her holy ambitions being as boundless as her confidence in God.

Her upright, sincere, and singularly refined nature made her turn instinctively to whatever was beautiful and great. This sense, so strong in her, developed gradually by her Christian education, which, by directing her soul towards the ideal beauty of the Divinity, increased her innate craving for perfection. Thus we cannot be surprised that one whose voice had often sounded in the docile ears of Juliette during her lifetime said after her death, that we ought to bless God for His "intense action" in this pure soul, so full of generous good will.

How Juliette responded to the Divine advances and strove to oppose no voluntary obstacle to the operations of grace, seconding and making them bear fruit in her soul by her persevering efforts, is what we shall endeavour to show in the following pages.

The Master of whom God made use to lead her on in the spiritual life was suffering. We have seen how He took from her, when still young, the mother she so dearly loved. Two years later came the death of her father, followed at different periods by separation from first one friend and then another to whom she was attached by tender and spiritual ties. Thus did she learn the lesson of detachment; and, finding herself destitute of all

natural support, Juliette had but one resource, which was to lean on the arm that struck, knowing that it alone could succour her. "My God," she cried in an outburst of faith, "you have taken my father and mother, and left me without what I so much need, and which you alone can supply!"

Her Christian resignation was equal to each trial as it came. Her heart was torn with grief, but never rebelled, not even when God took from her the dearest of the friends who were her joy and support. Gradually she came to appreciate the benefits of generous self-immolation, which brought peace to all the powers of her being by making them cling to the divine will, and caused that calm in a soul which is deaf to nature, in which it hears our Lord saying: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Little by little she came to love and even desire suffering, as a pledge of the Divine Master's predilection, and wrote: "Oh, how happy we shall be at the hour of death to have sacrificed all that was dearest to us,—parents and the purest forms of friendship. . . . Yes, my God, take all."

II. DETACHMENT

To renounce self, not only when God requires some heroic sacrifice, but in the smallest things of daily

occurrence, is one of the most imperative duties of Christian life, and essential to the acquirement of virtue. In the ordinary life, especially, it is continually necessary to die to one's own will in order to do that of others, and consequently that of God. "I am beginning the work of detachment," said Juliette; "that is to say, I am beginning to understand it, and to love and desire it. To understand it, for without it the heart cannot be wholly God's, cannot truly think of God alone, nor desire but Him in its joys or sorrows, as its only portion. To desire it, for it is, I believe, what God wants of me. To love it, for it is the only way by which I can belong wholly to our Lord, clinging to nothing and desiring nothing but His love. Oh yes, I love and esteem detachment,—that great lever to higher things."

She judged herself unsparingly, and waged an incessant interior war with her nature in order to "smooth down its angles," as she expressed it. Obstacles far from discouraging her only served as a spur to urge her forward. "The work in my soul goes on," she said, "though it sometimes puts me in a perfect perspiration!" She worked with a will to repress her vivacity of character, waged a war without mercy on her self-love, strove to moderate her sensitiveness and regulate the im-

pulsiveness of her heart, thus preventing sadness and discouragement from entering it.

“ All whom I love I love in Thee, my God,” she wrote. “ Rather would I never see them again than that I should offend Thee through them.”

Juliette well understood that virtue consists above all in doing very little things with very great love. She was very fond of flowers, but would prefer to place a rosebud before her dear statue of Our Lady, *Virgo Virginum*, to wearing it herself. She, with more reason than the poet, could have said in contemplating a flower : “ As thy perfume ascends, so does my heart soar upwards towards God.” Nevertheless, she deprived herself of this pleasure, as she also refrained from indulging her love of music, devoting the time she would have spent on it to visiting the poor and other works of zeal, as far as her health allowed.

Before undertaking the journey to Pellevoisin she placed in the hands of the friend who accompanied her a gold chain (a precious souvenir she greatly prized), telling her to “ sell it to the highest bidder,” for the benefit of a charity she specified, owning later to her sister that it was the only object to which she was attached, and she felt she must offer it in sacrifice to Our Lady before asking for her cure. To this instance we might add many

others, showing the simplicity of her soul and her care to refuse God nothing He might ask of her.

Naturally, she inclined to all that made life pleasant and easy. But she forced herself to thwart these tendencies, and set her face steadily against love of comforts or pleasures that might sap her spiritual life.

It required nothing less than her submission to obedience to check her desire for corporal penances, though she clearly saw how much higher is the practice of interior mortification. To make oneself all to all through charity requires meekness and self-denial, and is often difficult in family life, where inevitable contradictions and the friction of different characters offer many occasions of meritorious suffering.

Ever ready in sacrificing herself for the benefit of those around her, no one could be more ingenious in forestalling and gratifying their smallest desires. Acquired virtue helped to complete the gifts of her happy, joyous nature; and the evenness of temper she strove for aided her in surmounting the difficulties and loneliness so often to be met with in the life of an orphan.

"Juliette's absolute confidence in Divine Providence kept her above all anxiety about temporal affairs," attested her confessor. "She saw God in

all and above all, and had no other care than to do His holy Will."

III. ILL-HEALTH

To voluntary renunciation of self there was added in Juliette's case the permanent trial of ill-health. One might, in fact, almost count the days on which she was without suffering. Continually thwarted in her tastes and contradicted in her projects, she remained, as it were, outside the family life, bound down by a thousand and one irksome restrictions, to say nothing of painful and repeated remedies. She had already gathered a full harvest of sacrifices at an age when young people have usually tasted nothing but joy.

The Christian life was for her truly a warfare, and she early understood that to learn how to suffer one must learn how to love.

"May the love of God be my life," she wrote. "Then sufferings would become pleasant. Can one fear when leaning on the heart of Jesus, sustained and loved by Our Blessed Lady?"

The love of God, then, was the source of her great courage, her distinctive virtue.

"Her piety," one of her confessors remarked, "was always supported by reason. On that account she never fell back, but went steadily on. Under-

standing the importance of obedience, her upright and delicately sensitive soul was always happy in following the path traced out for her."

She was not ignorant that it is fidelity that draws down graces upon us, and therefore often read over her rule of life so as to become more steeped in its spirit, and was careful to bring order and regularity to bear on her spiritual life, which ensure perseverance and keep it in the golden mean between exaggeration and routine.

Above all other knowledge she placed that which would help on the salvation of her soul, and in the conduct of her life she took her inspirations from the truths of faith on which she daily meditated. Merely to say that she adhered faithfully to this salutary exercise would be to understate the case. Meditation gave light to her intellect, stimulated her will, and was as a refreshing bath in which she renewed the vigour of her soul. Prayer was for Juliette the principle of her spiritual advancement and the counterpoise to the distractions of a world to live in which she had to resign herself, but to live for which she had no desire.

Often unable to go to church, where would she have found divine help if not in recollection and prayer? She used to draw from her reading some truth, or lay up in her heart some sentence, the

thought of which would recall her gently to the holy presence of God. Without multiplying forms of prayer, or appearing to others more preoccupied or less active, she remained, to use the words of Bossuet, "in a state of dependence on God, simply laying her needs before Him"; and thus, to follow the same quotation, she practised "one of the methods of 'praying always,' and perhaps the most efficacious of all."

IV. THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Abundant graces of fortitude and light were the recompense of Juliette's fidelity. But the most precious of all was her growing attraction for the Tabernacle, which became the veritable centre of her life.

"I feel urged to go to the church to pray, to meditate," she said. "I stir up my faith before approaching our Lord, and when I have Him in my heart I become quite absorbed, and remain a long time in thanksgiving. This grace is only given me, I know, when I have been extra faithful to my meditation, ejaculatory prayers, and my resolution for the day."

According to the testimony of Mother Mary de Chantal, "Jesus Christ was her greatest joy, and the only source of her strength." It was from the

Divine Banquet she drew her generosity in sacrifice and in pouring herself out for the benefit of her family and all those with whom she came in contact.

Daily Communion was not allowed her until the latter years of her life in the world. The day marked by the visit of our dear Lord was always a happy one to Juliette,—“the day of the joy of her heart,” as she called it, and in preparation for which she redoubled her ardour and watchfulness over self.

Juliette approached God by faith, but still more so by love. “During my Communion this morning,” she wrote, “our Lord made me see and feel that I must really belong to Him, and that in Him alone I shall find the peace I so much need! That if I cast myself into His Heart in times of sorrow, instead of suffering alone, I should unite my suffering to His, and that soon my sacrifice would be drowned in His love. Thereupon I promised, and have already begun to rest in God more than in any other good. Oh, how this elevates, detaches, and makes one, so to say, enter into a closer intimacy with God! Trials no longer frighten me, as hitherto. This does not take away the suffering, but I am no longer alone. It seems to me that when I say to Jesus ‘I am all Thine,’ that *all* includes my entire being.”

To this very real and generous consecration of herself to Him, our Lord responded by an outpouring of Divine grace. In her notes at that time she wrote: "During the forty hours I strove to give the Sacred Heart a little more love. But, my God, it was not *I* that gave, but Thou Thyself, and my soul experienced an ineffable consolation that is the sweetest secret I have ever had to keep. What graces I received during these hours of adoration! To be conscious of the Divine presence of our Lord, to hear Him speak to my heart, to live under His eye and know He was within me! What joy!"

Rightly may it be said that those moments were well filled that she spent in the church in recollection (and often, alas! in solitude): those hours of guard, monthly adoration, and her holy vigils with our Lord on the night of Holy Thursday.

But we should be wrong in thinking that it was the hope of spiritual consolation that drew Juliette to the Divine presence. She knew too well by sad experience the aridities, the withdrawal of all sensible grace which are the trial of faithful souls, and also, it must be allowed (to the shame of our poor fallen nature), a happy preservative against the wiles of self-love and a secret complacency in ourselves.

At such times Juliette found in humility an antidote to discouragement. "If I were only to think of Heaven during those times of distraction and weariness in church!" she wrote. "It is one of the things that causes me most suffering to think we can even get tired of being near our Lord.

"Why does not the green wood burn in the fire?—Because it is full of sap. Why does my soul, so loved by the Divine Heart of Jesus, resist such love?—It is because it is full of self. And so the love that ought to set it on fire, and cause it to rise to Him in a bright flame, turns only into smoke."

Do we not say truly that Juliette judged herself unsparingly? And is not this the one way of remaining really humble? Thus she expected all from the Divine help. In her confiding prayers she asked whatever she wanted, even to the smallest details, with a simplicity which won the Heart of God. Had she a project to mature, or an energetic determination to take, it was not to the world her faith led her for counsel, but to the God of the Eucharist.

Her apostolic soul did not limit its horizon to her personal needs nor those of the restricted circle of her family or friends. She prayed for all mankind with the same ardour and intensity, and unceasingly implored grace for infidels and for the

success of the foreign missionaries, whose generous zeal was shared by her apostolic heart. Above all, she prayed with tears for France, whose falling away from the spirit of faith grieved her sorely.

During the days when the decrees against the religious communities were being carried out Juliette felt as if the hours of our Lord's scourging and St. Peter's denial had come again.

With what holy indignation she denounced, at those times, the official pillage and the triumph of evil. Feeling her powerlessness, she armed herself with the Christian's weapon of revenge, earnestly prayed for the persecutors, offering to the outraged majesty of God that prayer of the Saviour of the world: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

Her zeal and sense of justice made her regard the duty of reparation as of strict obligation. How she longed to multiply her powers of loving, in order to make up to the Sacred Heart the glory of which it was robbed by the impious. When she read of any sacrilegious profanation her countenance betrayed her inward grief, and we need not seek further than this sense of the necessity of reparation and self-immolation to find the secret motive of her desire for the religious life. In the world she could give to God but a tithe of her time. In

the cloister she could offer to Him in sacrifice, with all her youthful ardour, every moment of her life and every beating of her heart.

The love of God and of souls was in her as a spark of fire which the vivifying air of the cloister was to fan into a burning furnace.

CHAPTER VI

VOCATION

I

It is in the love of the Sacred Heart that we are about to see Juliette's religious vocation bud forth, develop, and attain its full growth.

Recalling, one day, the far-off memories of her school days, Sister Mary of Mercy wrote: "It was at the feet of the Sacred Heart, whose statue adorned the large study hall, that one day during lesson time I heard the first call of the Divine Master."

She was then twelve years old, and already her striking qualities gave promise of what the future of this child would be.

Mother Mary of St. Louis de Gonzaga, head mistress of the school, wrote as follows, a few months after Juliette's death:

"This dear child was almost angelic in her piety and purity. Her devotion to Our Lady, at once tender and strong, made her gentle but firm

in the struggles she had to go through to ensure the triumph of good in herself and in those around her. I must own I never approached that dear child but with great respect. In her the supernatural seemed to predominate over the natural.

“ Her heart did not seem made for mere earthly affections, and I am not astonished that Jesus culled that young flower so soon.”

From the place of exile to which she had been driven by religious persecution, another sister traced the following sketch of her former pupil : “ Juliette, when quite a child, gave promise of being all for God. By her innocence and ardent love she belonged to Him already. She hungered and thirsted for Holy Communion, and the impossibility of receiving it oftener than on Sundays was positive suffering to her.”

The world had no attraction for her, and her growing aversion for dress distressed Mme. Kérue!l, who, like most young mothers, loved to see her girls look nice. One day when she had frizzed their hair, as she not unfrequently did, Juliette plunged her head into a basin of water. . . . For the first time she remained unpunished, and henceforth there was no question of frisettes.

Although the young girl was not often seen in the Parish Church at that time, her fervour when

there was so edifying that the person next her, thinking to please her parents, said to them one day : “ Your Juliette will be a religious ; she prays so earnestly.”

These words confirmed the apprehensions they had already felt, and marked the beginning of the struggle their parental hearts had to undergo. They tried to deceive themselves. These desires for the contemplative life, would they ever develop into a firm resolve to embrace it ? This excessive taste for pious reading, was it not only due to the influence of the nuns, and would it not die of itself when the time came for her to make her entrance into society ?

However, that hour of pleasure never sounded for Juliette, nor did she seek it. Rather she listened to the voice of Jesus saying in the interior of her heart : “ Come, follow me.” And to do this is there any road more sure than that of the Cross ?

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It was at Lourdes in 1896 that Juliette for the first time seriously asked herself the question : “ Have I a religious vocation ? ” and faced all the consequences the answer would entail on her future life.

To know the will of God in her regard was her sole desire ; and there, where she had culled the

rare flower of a faithful friend, and had seen her beloved father weep as those weep who believe and hope, before the statue of Mary, through whom all graces flow to us, her most ardent prayer had been that of the blind man in the Gospel: " Lord, that I may see ; that I may see what you want of me. Is it the practice of the Christian life in the world, or, better still, the preparation for the more perfect life of the cloister ? "

The wise counsels she then received, her own interior reflections, the desires and attractions of the pure young girl, clearly proved that she was indeed one of those happy, privileged souls called to choose the " better part."

She had even then, at the age of sixteen, such an avidity for austerities that Mme. Kérue! could no longer deceive herself. During her stay at Nantes, being near a convent of the Poor Clares, she used to hear during her sleepless nights the sound of the bell calling the sisters to the night office. Its plaintive tones re-echoed in the very depths of her heart, asking a last sacrifice from the dying mother,—that of the willing offering of her child to the good God.

For several years it was quite impossible for Juliette to make any public mention of her projects. After the death of her parents she could not

forget that her young sister had still need of her influence, counsels, and affection.

In order to maintain and develop her interior life, she followed the oft-repeated counsel of Leo XIII., and asked to be enrolled in the Third Order of St. Francis, of which she received the holy livery on March 25, 1899, choosing her beloved St. Anne as her patroness.

Encouraged by the holy examples of the Franciscan saints, enriched by a share in the precious treasure of the merits of the order, Juliette rapidly rose from the observance of the commandments to that of the evangelical counsels, and was happy to be able to satisfy her devotion to Our Lady by reciting her office in her praise, and oftener still the *Paters* and *Aves* prescribed by the rule of the Third Order, and which she never omitted without grave reason.

But above and beyond these pious obligations and exercises Juliette always looked forward to embracing the religious life, waiting only till she was free to do so, and, still more, till her health made it possible.

That we may know her secret thoughts and follow the various phases of her interior life we must have recourse to her notes, which remain to us, quite contrary to her own wishes, for she had thrown

them in the fire a few days before her departure for the Convent of the Good Shepherd, whence they were rescued by her sister, who was loth to lose what she considered such a treasure.

The highest aspirations need the confirmation of virtuous acts to make them of value; and if we give here some fragments of Juliette's private notes, it is because her short but most edifying life gave ample and constant proof of the sincerity of the sentiments she poured forth in the presence of God, with the full confidence that none but He would ever see them.

"Oh, if I did but know how to suffer for God alone!" she wrote. "If only I knew the gift of God, this gift of vocation, that gift of love which draws down His love upon us."

She defined the religious life, such as she understood and desired it, as follows: "A religious is a creature of God, consecrated to God, receiving God daily in Holy Communion, and raising itself to Him by prayer. Shall I, too, ever have the great happiness of living for God alone? . . . But my life can be made meritorious here, and that is God's present will for me. I understood this morning that it is not impossible to lead a contemplative life in the world and practise the same obligations of recollection in the presence of God.

the same spirit, the same virtues,—obedience, humility, charity, poverty ; the same love above all, and the same source of happiness,—Holy Communion ! ”

In spite of her energy, Juliette often felt keenly her natural weakness and the trial of day after day passing without bringing any assurance of her ever being able to leave the world. It was then she used to have recourse to her dear Mother Mary de Chantal, whose words we quote : “ Often have I been the confidante of her interior grief at being unable sooner to realise her desire for the religious life, knowing that only in the cloister could she be freed from the cares of the world which prevented her giving herself to God to the full extent of her desires.”

But if Juliette’s heart was thus afflicted, her will remained none the less firm, and it was to encourage herself that she wrote thus : “ The religious life must be mine, if it be possible ; but for this it is necessary to desire it more and more strongly ! . . . The grace of vocation is making itself more felt within me. All this suffering apart withdraws me somewhat from the world. I can easier lead an interior life, and the desire of solitude grows of itself. How gladly would I leave the world at this moment, and sacrifice my little possessions,

all that is dear to me, and my life of freedom. The world weighs me down, and makes me sad. All that is most perfect in it seems so imperfect. . . . Why have I waited so long before casting myself into Thy arms, my Jesus? Thou art, indeed, all things to the soul that loves Thee ! ”

Again she writes : “ My joys do not make me cling to that which more and more I desire to give up. Oh, Lord, shall I never leave this world in which at present Thou dost wish me to live? Here I cannot be entirely Thine, nor love Thee as I could wish. Nevertheless, if it be Thy Will, *fiat* ! ”

Thus Juliette resigned herself to the delays imposed on her by the Divine Will, encouraging herself with the thought of the eternal recompense. She had received the gift of viewing death with confidence, speaking of it, according to her confessor’s testimony, with wonderful calmness, looking forward to it as to that which would for ever fix her will in good, and thus assure her not only the possession of God but the power of loving Him eternally. “ How sweet is death, and how beautiful is Heaven! To see Thee, my God, to be ever at Thy feet, contemplating Thee, immersing oneself in Thy perfections, and living a life of love. Oh, is it possible that this day will ever really come ?

If I thought of it more often and more deeply, how light the cross would appear."

Fearing, above everything, being carried away by her imagination, she repeats again and again her good desires: "I want to see Thee, my Jesus, or at least to live for Thee out of this world which tempts me . . . but which shall never have me, let Satan do as he will."

Juliette was not exempt from the temptations that are necessary to test our faith and humility; and if she so often came off victorious in these combats against the devil, the world, and her own nature, it was because she was never afraid of the fight, knowing well that all our life on earth is a warfare.

Consecrated in early life to Our Lady, under her beautiful title of "Queen of all Hearts," she had recourse to her aid in difficult circumstances.

"I placed myself under the protection of my Queen," she wrote one night, "and a feeling of strength came to me which was not my own."

On these occasions she addressed herself familiarly to her good angel for whom she had a profound devotion, owning simply her need of his aid, as without it she feared what she knew her own nature to be capable of. "Come, my good angel," she would say with affectionate familiarity, "let

us both go at it together, for I know what I should be capable of at present if left to myself."

Fearing once that her desire for death might be inspired by a secret cowardice, she disavowed it in these terms: "My Jesus, I want to live in order to love You better, to give You more glory, to win souls to You. But I need courage. You have given me much. Give me yet more. This desire of loving You comes from Yourself, but do violence to me, force me to love You. Speak to my heart, and act in me. I abandon myself to Your good pleasure, but on condition that I love You much."

II

The hour was approaching in which this soul which already felt herself so beloved by the Divine Heart of Jesus was to receive a fresh proof of His love.

On Christmas Day, 1903, in the Chapel of the Sisters of Hope at Nantes, Juliette heard for the first time the Rev. Père Lemius preach, who, in accents of burning love, put before his audience the desires of the Sacred Heart and the practice of that devotion which He Himself had asked from Bd. Margaret Mary.

How could Juliette resist these pressing invita-

tions and the effect of the words she then heard ? Her soul yielded itself up to their holy influence. With all the energy of her strong will she purposed to adhere strictly to the programme laid down by the good Father for his hearers. And that she might give herself up more courageously than ever to a life of devotedness and sacrifice she enrolled herself under the banner of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart. In order to impregnate her soul with the spirit of the devotion which had become so dear to her, she became the disciple of Bd. Margaret Mary, whose writings henceforth she had always at hand.

Every morning she read over the first act of consecration with which our Lord Himself inspired her who received these revelations, as well as His consoling promises, and eagerly embraced the different practices in honour of the Sacred Heart recommended by the saintly religious. More than once her ill-health interrupted her series of Communions on the First Fridays ; then she would say, in Bd. M. Mary's words : " Have we not hearts that can love and bodies that can suffer ? "

Under the influence of this fresh grace she burned with the desire to spread around her this devotion she so well understood, and poured out to her friend Mathilde X. all her plans on this subject ;

but alas ! their united action, which gave promise of being so fruitful, was of short duration.

" Divine love always enters a heart by a fresh wound," says Père Eymard. Juliette had now a painful experience of this truth.

" The death of my poor friend, carried off in six days, and dying before my eyes with a smile on her lips, has left me deeply impressed with the vanity of all things." This entry in her notebook is followed by the following words, the first sentence being underlined : "A firm resolution to leave the world before the end of the year."

" My dear friend has helped me. Since her death, graces have accumulated in my soul. . . . The Sacred Heart urges me to give myself to Him. I long to leave all. Yet outwardly I am neither good nor patient, and I shall go without having gained anything. . . . All the same, I love You, my Jesus, and You know it well."

Juliette here speaks of leaving the world, and we know, from what has been said before, whither she directed her steps. The Confessor who then guided her soul gives us the reasons which prompted her to choose the Order of Poor Clares in preference to any other.

" Her spirit of sacrifice was so great," he says, " that she never dreamed of separating love from

penance, and for this reason she would not hear of any other community than the Poor Clares."

He himself did not conceal his fears for her health, although she appeared then to be quite strong again. The doctor who was consulted having given his opinion in favour of her going, Juliette took the step, with her characteristic generosity, without counting the cost.

What did it matter, she thought, if she passed long years in the cloister, or remained there only the time necessary to prepare for the eternal nuptials?

We have seen, however, that after a short trial Juliette had to resign herself to leaving the Poor Clares. The chalice thus presented her by the Divine Will was a very bitter one. She drank it to the dregs; but her suffering was so intense that in writing home to announce her return she said that this decision had been the greatest of her sacrifices.

"I cherish the dearest memories of this month," she wrote, "and a profound sense of the perfection practised in this spot through which I have but passed."

After such an attempt, many another would have been satisfied to let the matter rest, but Juliette always longed for more, with the idea of belonging wholly to her Divine Spouse.

What anguish did she not go through during the succeeding months at the thought of living an easy, and, as she considered it, an unmeritorious life in the world. She felt so sure she had a religious vocation, and had been so often confirmed in this belief by her confessors. The fear of losing her holy vocation was a veritable torture to her, which she could not conceal from her family.

Some months after her return, Charlotte surprised her in her room kneeling before her statue of Our Lady, and, seeing her look of suffering, exclaimed, "What are you doing there?" "I have just been saying to Our Lady, 'Gouge out one of my eyes, break one of my legs, if you like, but do show me what you want me to do.'"

Nor had she long to wait for the response to this novel style of prayer. At the beginning of Lent, Juliette's health betrayed all the most serious symptoms of consumption; and during Holy Week she brought up so much blood that her strength, both of soul and body, completely broke down. She, who was always so courageous, so detached from earthly things and accustomed to the thought of death, became smitten with the fear of dying.

Prolonged sufferings, painful emotions, and privations of all kinds overwhelmed the poor sufferer during the weeks that followed.

The will of God in her regard was clear enough now, and what a harvest of sufferings she had to offer Him every evening!

"It is evident," she wrote after more than a year of seclusion, "that my present vocation is to suffer. Without being confined to bed, I am a prey to ailments which cured to-day return to-morrow. In fact, though I feel my strength is returning, I am bound by restrictions more or less irksome which never suffer me to do my own way.

"And I dare to complain, my God, because You draw me to union with You by suffering! This sickness is one of the greatest graces of my life. How have I profited by it hitherto? . . ."

Those around her would have said, on the contrary, how resigned and patient she was: how watchful over the movements of nature, obedient to her nurses, and always joyous in the depths of her heart, because her soul was in peace. "My God, give me the grace to suffer without complaint, without bitterness, brusqueness, or weariness," was one of her prayers.

Blessed Margaret Mary's beautiful writings served to strengthen her soul, the weakness of which she was now experiencing, and she never tired of repeating in her turn these words: "So wound this heart which is Thine, and so transpierce it

on every side, that it may no longer be able to contain aught that is earthly and human, nor to rest until it finds in Thee, who art its centre, its joy and repose."

Such an accumulation of sacrifices had made resignation habitual to her; but one regret, all the same, ever grew in her heart,—that of having to abandon for ever all thought of the religious life.

Our Lord, however, had pity on her desires and her invincible hope.

At the beginning of the year 1906, the biography was published of Sister Mary of the Divine Heart,—one of the highest glories of the Order of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd.

A religious, who for long years had given frequent proofs of his interest in the Kéruef family, struck by the similarity of the trials, struggles, and difficulties through which both the illustrious German nun and the poor invalid at Saint Nazaire had to encounter in the path of their religious vocation, recommended the latter to read a book containing so holy an example, which now, more than ever, it would be useful for her to read and ponder over. May he be for ever blessed for the good he thus procured for Juliette.

From this book she became acquainted not only with a soul wonderfully privileged by God, but

also with the work of the Good Shepherd Order, which she was now able to study and admire for the first time. More than anyone did Juliette know how to profit by these lessons, and draw from them practical conclusions.

To devote herself to saving the strayed sheep, to win them in order to lead them to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and in order to obtain their salvation, to pray and sacrifice herself in their place, this should be also her vocation, the way she had sought in vain for so many years and which she discovered by the light cast on her soul when reading these pages whence issued the grace and light she needed. . . . Her prayer at the Grotto of Lourdes was at last answered, and her eyes were at length opened.

Stretched on her reclining couch, radiant with heavenly joy, she tasted the delight of having at long last found her aim in life. . . .

But suddenly the remembrance of her wretched health, her chronic weakness, came to freeze once more her soul which a moment before had been bathed in the sunshine of hope.

"I remember finding her," says her sister, "weeping with regret at the sight of a religious. I knew the struggle that was being waged in the depth of her heart between reason and faith, and

in which, by a mysterious disposition of Providence, faith was to remain the conqueror."

A friend crowned her desires by procuring her a relic of Sister Mary of the Divine Heart. "I can assure you, I felt the presence of my dear protectress the very moment I received her relic," she said, when writing to thank her friend. "If it is true that our self-love dies a quarter of an hour after us, I am sure that my gratitude will do so still later . . . or rather, never; for gratitude is immortal."

And, in fact, at the sight of her precious fragment Juliette experienced an outburst of joyousness similar to those of her early years. A happy transformation came over her,—her confidence was redoubled, as were also her supplications.

Let us allow her to tell us in her own words of the signal grace bestowed on her.

"For a year and a half I had been ill. Disease of the lungs had seriously shattered my health, and, although the acute crisis had passed, I had no longer any hope, humanly speaking, of ever being able to return to my former mode of life.

"Always in a reclining position, I could not occupy myself in any way without extreme fatigue, so that I dreaded the least effort. To walk more than a hundred steps without some friendly support

had become impossible, in consequence of the great weakness which prostrated me, and which resisted all the devoted care by which I was surrounded. Hoping that the pure and invigorating air at the sea-side would strengthen me, we spent the summer at Pornichet, but, though the chapel was very near us, I seldom was able to get so far.

“ But the good God who knows so well how to console in the time of trial, providentially brought in my way *The Life of Sister Mary of the Divine Heart*. Henceforth the book was always at my side. That beautiful soul attracted and charmed me greatly. She became to me as a personal friend, and my delight was great when someone who was in touch with the Good Shepherd at Angers procured for me a relic of Sister Mary of the Divine Heart.

“ In the month of August 1906, a religious, who was a friend of ours, came to see us, and suggested the idea of asking my heavenly friend to obtain my cure. Our Blessed Lady had granted her so many favours on her feast days, that I began a novena to end on August 15, reciting her act of consecration to the Sacred Heart.

“ Then I promised my dear protectress that, as far as it depended on me, I would become a religious of the Good Shepherd, if she obtained my cure.

“ I was a little downcast when the 15th of August came, and I was not cured ; but it was my want of faith. Two weeks later a friend came to stay a few days with us. She reanimated my confidence, and we began a novena to Our Lady of Pellevoisin. It was decided I should go and pray at Pellevoisin itself for the favour I was asking through the intercession of Sister Mary of the Divine Heart.

“ I must confess that faith alone induced me to take this journey, for, in opposition to the encouragement of friends, was the doctor's earnestness in trying to make me give up the thought of this pilgrimage, the consequences of which he predicted would be most disastrous for my health.

“ The next day, the first Friday of the month, I received Holy Communion. Then my fears disappeared, and three days later I set out with my aunt for Tours, where we were to make a halt of thirty-six hours.

“ No sooner was I in the train than a profound peace took possession of me. The journey was excellent, and on Tuesday I found myself less tired than usual. In the evening, with much painful effort, I went to a neighbouring chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Pellevoisin, and there, during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament,

ardent prayers were offered for me to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

“The following morning I went again for Holy Communion. On returning to the house it was noticed that I walked with less difficulty. It was then proposed that I should visit a Sanctuary dedicated to the Holy Face, for which I had a deep and longstanding devotion. For this we had to drive for two hours. It was evident that a notable improvement had taken place in my health. The next day, September 13, we started on the pilgrimage to Pellevoisin at six o'clock in the morning.

“At 9 a.m. we arrived. On hearing the name of the holy spot announced, I was filled with a sense of perfect confidence. I made my way slowly to the little chapel, where Our Blessed Lady was awaiting me, with outstretched hands full of graces.

“How describe the moment when my whole soul became absorbed in prayer? Renewing my promise to Sister Mary of the Divine Heart, I implored my cure, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. At that instant my prayer was granted. I rose up cured!

“On leaving the chapel I was told I must walk alone now for the glory of the Most Blessed Virgin; and indeed, full of life, strength, and happiness, I followed all the exercises of the pilgrimage,—high

Mass, procession, etc. ; and 9 o'clock in the evening found me at the foot of the Calvary, where a sermon was being delivered which truly sketched the programme for my future life : 'To seek Jesus, to find Him, to be united to Him.'

" In spite of the rain, I went very early the next morning to the church, feeling more and more certain of my cure ; and it was not without keen regret that in the afternoon I left that hallowed spot where Heaven and earth seem united.

" I bore the seven hours of the return journey perfectly, and my relations could not believe their eyes when they saw me going upstairs three steps at a time !

" I took up at once my place so long vacant in the midst of my family and the occupations I had had to give up. I set to work to make scapulars of the Sacred Heart, which were asked for on all sides, as well as pictures of Sister Mary of the Divine Heart. It was a pleasure to spread far and near both one and the other in the spirit of gratitude and to make known my cure."

But this external apostolate, though a natural expression of her thankfulness, did not make this favoured child of Mary forget her solemn promise. She took the first step towards its realisation in November, by asking the Mother-General to be

allowed to enter the novitiate of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers. But, before giving her a definite answer in the affirmative, prudence required that time should bear witness to the reality of the cure of which she gave an account, and, without her request being refused, she was advised to wait. She did so in peace, conscious of having done her duty. With joy she saw her vigour increasing, and her ability to work restored, of which she had completely lost the habit.

She hastened to consecrate to the Divine Master her renewed strength, and in her notes we find the following: "The gift of vocation is the supreme call of Jesus. What can I give Him in return if not myself, not in sentiment but in reality? Yes, my God, I am Thine. Give, then, this certitude to those who grieve me so by their incredulity."

Her attraction for family life, and the happy qualities she displayed therein, may have made some think that her career was mapped out for her there; but as Dom Guéranger writes: "In leaving it she was to serve as an example to so many others whom their friends and relations strive to deter, when on the threshold of the religious life, by the consideration of the good they are capable of doing in the world. As if the capacities of a richly endowed nature did not always turn the more





Juliette Kéruef at the time of her entering religion.

completely towards God, their first principle, in proportion as they are the more perfect."

On May 7, 1907, she paid her first visit to the Mother House at Angers, accompanied by a friend who had witnessed her cure.

The truly maternal welcome she received, the warm-heartedness with which her request to enter the Order was granted, touched her profoundly.

On the eve of her leaving home, after the usual prayers said in common, Juliette, kneeling before the picture of Our Lady of Pellevoisin, recited, in the name of the whole family, the act of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To Him alone, through the hands of the Blessed Virgin, she confided all that was most dear to her. To Him alone did she look for the courage requisite to leave all and follow Him.

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In the following pages we shall see how the Sacred Heart, before calling to Himself His consecrated spouse, fulfilled in her His Divine promise: "Fervent souls shall rise rapidly to great perfection."

During the short but well-filled years that Juliette spent in the Order of the Good Shepherd she applied herself solely to the practice of the religious virtues, her eyes fixed on her adorable model, who lived and died for love of her.

CHAPTER VII

POSTULANTSHIP

I

ON June 20, 1907, Juliette entered the novitiate of the Order of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers.

Wishing to spare those she loved the grief of returning to Saint Nazaire without her, she would not let them accompany her. Cutting short the farewells, she left her home without looking back, and, fearing her own weakness, went rapidly on her way from the house which for her was filled with such sacred memories. "If I had looked round at that moment," she said later to her sister, "I should have run upstairs again."

She arrived at the Good Shepherd in company with the devoted friend who had taken her to Pellevoisin, and who had been the witness of her cure. The serenity of her soul was reflected in her countenance, and no one would have suspected the agonies her heart was enduring. Jesus alone could

measure the extent of her sacrifice, nor was He slow in richly recompensing her.

Receiving a motherly welcome from the Superior-General, Mother Mary of St. Domitilla, Juliette was immediately conducted, according to a custom in the Order, to the foot of the Altar of Our Lady, by the Mistress of Novices, who offered her to the Divine Mother, while she herself renewed the consecration of herself to the service of God and souls through her hands, begging her to guide her first steps in the convent, where she hoped to see realised, at last, her desires for the religious life. From there she went to the chapel and then to her cell, everywhere feeling more and more in her heart, together with a sense of joy, peace, and happiness, the assurance she was truly in the place marked out for her by the will of God.

Let us hear our postulant herself recount her first impressions of the convent. The day after her arrival she wrote to those whom she had left : “ Let us begin by uniting in thanksgiving to the good God who has been pleased to pour out on our souls such graces of consolation. I see you all three smiling at these words, which will make you guess my happiness. I see by your letter that you do not begrudge me my joy !

“ Let us rejoice together in our thanksgiving. . . .

When I arrived at the convent with Mme. F——, we both felt full of emotion. The Reverend Mother-General and the Mistress of Novices received us in the parlour, and then came the great moment the large enclosure door was opened, and then closed again behind her who only asks that it may be secured by a triple bolt. Then came a truly motherly embrace from several sisters, followed by a smile of welcome from all whom I have since met and that means from very many. My interior joy is full to overflowing, and I feel quite confused at receiving so many graces. Yes, I believe I have arrived at port. It is not, believe me, a passing impression, but an intimate conviction that I have been guided by the Lord's hand to where His Heart wishes me to be."

Juliette had asked the good God to give her a renewed assurance of her vocation. Later, she owned in confidence that she had received that grace at the moment she entered the enclosure, and that it had filled her with joy. In an outburst of gratitude, and by way of corresponding to the advances on our Lord's side, she at once promised to make her own that maxim of the holy Abbé Perreyve: "To do very little things with very great love."

It was indeed wholeheartedly, and with all the

force of her ardent nature, that she took up the religious life, applying herself from the very first to the faithful practice of the rules and constitutions.

The impression she made on her companions in the novitiate was from the beginning that of a soul which was in its right place and was determined to remain there. That she already understood what Jesus was asking of her is clear from her notes of these early days: "The soul, the spouse of Christ, ought to consider herself the spouse of her Divine Lord condemned to death, and that to share His griefs and humiliations is only her duty. In the same way, as Jesus has died for her interests, she ought also to die for His: it is but just."

In one of her first meditations as a postulant, while pondering over a recommendation on the subject of silence which she had heard in the novitiate, she seemed to hear our Lord say in the depths of her heart: "If you keep your eyes cast down you will see Me: if you keep silence you will hear Me speak." At once she formed the resolution to be faithful to the practice of silence in honour of that of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, and to recollection in union with His in that Divine Sacrament. "The Victim is *silent*," she wrote. "I will faithfully observe the silence imposed by

rule. It is *despoiled of all things* : I must work at an absolute renunciation of self. It is *bound*. I wish to consider myself also bound by my rule and my resolutions."

"It is consumed by the fire of Divine love the more quickly in proportion to its intensity," she continues ; and in order to copy her Divine Master, and be like Him, a victim of love and expiation, she accepted in advance all the trials of religious life,—“When wearied or weighed down by the body, I will think of the value of a day spent here, near to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in the midst of the Sisters, His spouses ; and, surrounded by such priceless spiritual helps, I will think of the relief one such day might bring to a soul in Purgatory, and how it would suffice to sanctify a generous soul."

From that time her life was a series of acts of fidelity, obedience seeming to be her characteristic virtue. To sustain her in moments of difficulty, or, on the other hand, to curb the ardour which prompted her to overtask her strength, the remembrance of a word or recommendation of her Mistress, or the fear of going against her wishes, would suffice. She was constantly appealing to authority either for permissions, or to submit her smallest desires or actions to their approval, and this without scruple

or constraint, but simply actuated by the principle which she called her act of faith: "I believe in the will of God being expressed in the will of superiors. I believe that the rule inspired by God makes known His will to me."

In proportion as her fidelity increased, so did her happiness and her conviction that she was in the right way. "If I could make a reproach to the good God," she said, "it would be for having left me seeking so many years for the door behind which He was waiting for me with so much tenderness."

Nevertheless, when one of her family proposed visiting her, she mistrusted herself. "If you come to see me too soon," she wrote, "I fear you will do what children do when having planted a flower they pull it up to see if it is going on well! But," she continued, "thank the Infinite Goodness for me, for each day I feel my little roots are taking deeper hold; but even when I shall have become quite detached from every tie, it will not be possible for me to resume my former intercourse with you. I shall, nevertheless, always love you,—you must never doubt that; but remember what a grand and beautiful thing a religious vocation is, and what a mystery it is that God implants in us, long before making His voice heard, the nature and the special

graces that fit us for one institute and not for another. And to think that in order to bring me here He actually worked a miracle ! You understand my happiness and my gratitude, which I can never express, however long I may live."

All the time of her postulanship Juliette's dispositions remained the same. At the end of July she wrote : " The longer I go on, the happier I become ; and it is not a matter of imagination, but a steady happiness based on principle, which I guard as a treasure."

" On Tuesday several of our Sisters are to receive the holy habit. I feel like a child who has been given a morsel of cake. I have tasted it, and desire nothing better than to have the whole of it." This desire, so simply expressed, was soon to be realised. The rule of the Good Shepherd Order does not strictly determine the length of the postulanship, but requires at least two months for postulants who have not already passed some time in one or other of the convents of the Order. On September 16 she was received by the community for her " clothing," with seventeen of her companions. Full of joy, she imparted the tidings to her family : " A quarter of an hour ago I was received for my clothing, and you must share my happiness, which is very great. . . . At last my desire of ten years'

standing is realised ! . . . Pray that I may become a good religious, faithful to all the graces I have received, and which keep on multiplying. . . . For nothing on earth would I change places with anyone, and I never cease thanking the Mother of Mercy for having taken me by the hand and brought me here. . . . Oh, how I love my new family, and how love gives birth spontaneously to devotedness and gratitude ! ”

II

Devotedness and gratitude were the two great qualities, over and above her religious virtues, that Juliette brought to bear on this new family, which she loved from the moment she knew it. The works of the Institute appealed to her ardent nature ; she loved them because she loved Jesus and understood the value of souls. She would gladly have made the whole world to share in her estimation of the Congregation she so cherished, which seemed to her too little known, and of which we will now briefly sketch the aim and works, according as they are defined in the Constitutions :—

“ The general end of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers, and that which is common to it with all the other congregations in the Church, is to serve and honour

God by the exact observance of the holy vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and a perfect imitation of all the virtues of our Lord and His most holy Mother. But the immediate and special end of the religious of this Order, and which distinguishes it from all others, is to imitate as far as they can, by the assistance of Divine grace, the most ardent charity with which the Heart of Jesus, Son of Mary, and that of Mary, Mother of Jesus, are inflamed towards souls created to the image and likeness of God and redeemed by the Precious Blood of His Son ; employing themselves with all their hearts, by the example of a holy life, by the fervour of their prayers, and by the efficacy of their instructions, in the conversion of girls and women who have fallen into the disorders of a depraved life, and who, being touched by God, desire to leave the state of sin to do penance under their guidance, and to learn more easily the means of serving His Divine Majesty and saving their souls."

This Institute took its origin from the Order of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge, founded in the seventeenth century by Blessed John Eudes, who was beatified by the Sovereign Pontiff Pius X. on April 25, 1909. In 1829; Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia Pelletier (declared Venerable by Leo

XIII., December 11, 1897) was called to found a house of her Order at Angers. Urged by the Spirit of God, the venerated Mother, in the hope of developing her Institute and procuring thus the salvation of a greater number of souls, conceived the idea of establishing a Generalate, having its head house at Angers. She encountered strong opposition to her projects, but, seconded by Mgr. Montault, Bishop of Angers, and by the Bishops of Grenoble and Metz, she obtained from the Sovereign Pontiff, Gregory XVI., the brief erecting the Generalate in 1835.

God made it clear that the work was His, and the marvellous rapidity with which it spread in the five parts of the world was regarded as a sign of His blessing on it.

The Institute now counts nearly 260 monasteries and about 8000 religious. These houses are divided into twenty-seven provinces, each having its own novitiate, the chief of all being that of the Mother-house at Angers, where the future religious prepare in prayer and recollection to labour one day for the salvation of erring souls, wherever obedience may send them.

The Rule of the Order of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers is that of St. Augustine, with constitutions proper for the works

of the Institute. The religious oblige themselves by a fourth vow to labour for the salvation of erring souls.

Besides the time given to mental prayer, they have also choir duties. They recite ordinarily the Office of the Blessed Virgin, adding the commemoration of the Sundays and feasts that occur. On the great festivals of the year and during Holy Week they say the Canonical Office. They thus blend the contemplative life with the active. There are few corporal austerities prescribed by the Rule; but to compensate for this, the work to which they devote themselves requires from the Sisters the complete and constant renunciation and denial of self, and an absolute devotedness to the souls they seek to save.

The community is composed of choir sisters, lay, and *tourière* or out sisters. The religious have no intercourse with the different categories of persons who enter the convent except that which is assigned them by obedience.

The categories are as follows :—

1. *The Penitents*: that is, those who, having forsaken the paths of honour and virtue, desire to return to them. Some apply of their own accord for admittance; others are sent by their families, or by persons interested in their welfare. The house



Religious of the Good Shepherd surrounded by the various classes
of their "children."

at Angers at present contains about 200 such, and the Institute 21,685 in all.

2. *The Sister Magdalens.* These are penitents who, thoroughly converted, desire to embrace the religious life, but, being debarred therefrom by their past life, find within the enclosure walls a separate monastery where they can follow the practices of the religious life and expiate their former faults by more rigorous penance. They follow closely the Carmelite rule, and wear a habit nearly resembling that of the Carmelites. They live under the guidance of a religious of the Good Shepherd, who fulfils in their regard all the functions of a superior. They number 80 at Angers, and 2500 throughout the Institute.

3. *The Preservates*, orphans or destitute children, who are received when quite young and kept until they are grown up. There are about 400 of these in the combined classes of the Mother-house and St. Nicholas at Angers, and 12,975 in the whole Institute.

At the beginning of their novitiate the novices are instructed in the rule, and initiated in the customs of religious life. In their second year, while still continuing their novitiate training, they are sent to help the Sisters working in the different sections named above, in order that they may have

experimental knowledge of what they will engage themselves to when making their profession.

The novitiate lasts two years, not including the day on which they received the religious habit. This time over, the novice is allowed to pronounce her annual vows—which she renews each year on the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady—for five years, when, if the community judge her worthy, she makes them in perpetuity. After the first profession she may be sent to one of the other houses of the Order, though some remain at the Mother-house. Their departure and destination are settled by the Mother-General. Such are the works to which Juliette consecrated her zeal, her devotedness, and all the treasures of her richly gifted nature and generous, ardent soul.

III

Juliette's reception of the religious habit was fixed for September 30, and her letters to her family before that event are not without interest, showing as they do how she mingled the supernatural with all the affairs of life, and strove to raise all with whom she had dealings to her own high standard of trust in God and absolute submission to His holy will.

To her aunt, who had been with the family

almost uninterruptedly since Juliette's childhood, she wrote : " Above all, do not distress yourself, dearest aunt, about me, and do not weep over my happiness, which is so great and so sweet. All your sacrifices on my account have borne fruit ; you tended and cared for me for our good God's sake ; may He reward you for it ! . . . Let me repeat once more the expressions of gratitude you have heard so often, but which to me have assumed quite a sacred aspect since the time when, in addition to all your former devotedness, you were to me as another mother, nursing me day and night during those eighteen months, with such unwearying tenderness, in spite of my being so exacting and bad-tempered. Now I can but pray for you and offer you with my whole heart the sacrifice of never being able to repay you, save by my prayers, for your devoted affection lavished on me from my very cradle.

" Now you must come to enjoy your day of triumph, in giving your child to the good God. It is the greatest honour He can give you, but you must pray for her, that she may prepare herself with the utmost possible generosity."

As her little nephew's health was causing grave anxiety to his parents, and her sister was afraid she would be unable to be present

at the clothing ceremony, Juliette wrote to console her :

“ Oh, pray much to Sister Mary of the Divine Heart! Tell her she must obtain the baby’s cure, and a long life, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Tell her that the dear little one is already consecrated, and that you, his mother, promise to bring him up in the fear of God, and for Him alone. Be generous. Promises which cost money are good, but promises which cost the heart much, are better.

“ The sacrifice of not seeing you and Felix at my clothing has been accepted ; and you may be sure, dearest, that it is a very painful one for me, too, for God knows how much I love you both. Is there anything I could sacrifice that is dearer to me? . . . You know how I shall be united to you in thought, and above all in prayer. If in spite of myself my eyes look round for you, I will close them and see you all three in the Sacred Heart.

“ Oh, how good God is in allowing me to have this sacrifice to offer for the dear little one! . . .”

“ It is incredible,” she said in one letter, “how that little lamb clings to my heart. I have not cried once since I came, but if my thoughts rest on the little pet I have to speedily send them to the next door. Believe me, it was him I found it

hardest to sacrifice on leaving home. . . . You see I have quite idealised the little angel. Oh, do take care to preserve him from worldliness ! take care of him yourself, and do not confide him to anyone else. I do not mean so much at present, but when his intelligence begins to awaken. Under pretext of promenades, parties, etc., children are entrusted to others often, with disastrous consequences for their little souls. I do not want to exaggerate, but the world is so wicked and Satan so malicious ! . . .

“ Little Pierre’s soul appears to me as a beautiful lily ; the beauty of flowers is of short duration, so, often, is that of souls. Then a vigilant gardener tends and cultivates his plant, keeps it in an even temperature, frees it from insects that destroy its brilliancy ; he even hedges it in with thorns, and in the winter brings it into the green-house. But a newly baptised soul, what is not its beauty and its value ? Oh, spare nothing to make the Divine Heart of Jesus, which is so outraged, find His delight in you, and rejoice the good God by keeping spotless the little flower He has confided to you ! . . .

“ Yes, Lottie dear, my ardent wish for him is that he may become a valiant Christian, a priest and missionary ; but remember that all the saints

and great souls have had mothers who prepared the way for their future life.

“ Your mission is a beautiful one, and greatly resembles my own, for I do not forget how often you said : ‘ One is a mother either by nature or grace.’ Yes, and may that love make us forget self. . . . Could you not, my dear Lottie, make an act of consecration to Our Lady, in little Pierre’s name, on the feast of the Heart of Mary ? You could write it as from him, and keep it always. In it he would give her his little heart, his life, his future, asking the grace of a vocation to the priesthood and religious life, as also the love of the Sacred Heart and souls.”

Juliette had been so truly Charlotte’s “ little mother ” that evidently her brother-in-law had been accustomed to consult her on many points, for we find her gently pointing out that it is no longer necessary for her to counsel them on all occasions.

“ Above all,” she writes, “ if about to come to a decision, whether in a grave or slight matter, do not think that my consent is necessary. There is but one condition, one which I feel sure you fulfil,—that of consulting God in prayer. Treat with Him as the spouse of your soul. I have entrusted you all to Him, and am certain He will help my

dear Felix by the gift of fortitude and by His inspirations."

Then calling to mind the works then on hand for the enlargement of the docks at Saint Nazaire, in which her brother-in-law was occupied, she conceived the following ingenious comparison:

"Your occupations and mine, my dear Felix, are somewhat alike. The good God acts, and I lend a hand to His work. We are in the outer harbour digging the foundations. The dock is begun; we must deepen it without breaking our supports,—good-will and perseverance. It must have a wide entrance,—unlimited confidence; a drawbridge,—abnegation and detachment. A red-hot furnace is needful for all our ironwork,—we must love much. Finally, shall we be ready on the given day, and will the abundant waters of grace find a ready entrance? Our Lady represents the superintendent of the works, and *I am you*!

"After the preparations for the opening of the docks with its grand festivities, numerous invitations, speeches made on the occasion of taking possession, there comes the question of building grand vessels to do honour to our quay and the entrance to our city. Four beautiful ships will be constructed on the grandest scale (four beauti-

ful vows), of each of which in turn the Divine Pilot will take the command."

Writing to a friend she says in her own bright way: "The other day, while doing some little household duties, I thought to myself, 'Let us imagine we are both in the same train for Heaven, but not in the same compartment. Every now and then the train stops; everyone gets out; there is embracing, a thousand and one little things are said, and then there is the whistle, and we are off again. A happy journey to you! We are truly in a pilgrimage train!'"

Before taking the religious habit, Juliette made a mental review of what she termed her faults, and begged pardon of her family for them.

"I embrace you both whole-heartedly, and beg you to forgive me all my pranks in the past, my bad temper; in fact, all the sins in the Catechism, and the trouble I have given you. . . . Let us give each other the kiss of peace before I take up my new way of life, into which nothing defiled must enter. . . . You would give me great pleasure by adorning father's and mother's dear tomb on the 30th with flowers. *Their daughter's feast is theirs also.*"

Nor did her grateful heart forget the poor old people who had so often been the recipients of her

devoted charity when she was at home, and to whose prayers she had so frequently recommended herself, rightly regarding them as powerful intercessors. "Do not forget my dear poor," she now wrote before her clothing, "nor to make them sharers in my joy on the 30th by a little roast-beef, or in some other way. I have made them make so many novenas!"

One of the recipients of her bounty, on hearing that Juliette had entered the Convent of the Good Shepherd, exclaimed, with tears in her eyes: "I should not have prayed for her with such good will had I known I was asking that she might go away!"

IV

The ceremony of receiving the habit was, as we have said, fixed for September 30.

In preparing for it, Juliette's great desire was that her life might tend to a closer and closer interior union with the Beloved of her soul. "I wish," she wrote in her notes, "that every action, even the smallest, may be done solely for Jesus, who awaits me in Holy Communion, on my clothing-day, and in Heaven, and to remember unceasingly that on the amount of love with which each action is done depends the force of its impetus towards the Heart of Jesus. While preparing for receiving

the habit I must unite myself to our Lord in His incarnation and nativity, that henceforth His Divine presence may manifest itself in me. May Our Blessed Lady help me to prepare, by a renewal of my spiritual life, for this happy birth of Jesus within me, for my heart is but a lowly crib,—a stable which has often sheltered vile animals.”

It was in these dispositions that the fervent postulant entered into retreat, on September 26, as an immediate preparation for receiving the holy habit of religion. The days were spent in joy and fervour. In her meditations she saw our Lord, as it were, standing before her, and she wrote : “ Jesus, the Spouse, the Divine King, presents Himself to His bride. . . . His Mother and His angels, our Venerable Mother and Sister Mary of the Divine Heart surround Him. Each angel presents me with one of our Lord’s jewels, which are now mine. One brings His Cross,—‘ Obedience ’ ; another, the lance,—‘ Charity ’ ; a third, the scourge,—‘ Mortification and penance ’ ; others, the crown of thorns,—‘ Humiliations ’ ; the nails,—‘ the Vows ’ ; the winding-sheet,—‘ Death to Self-will ’ ; the crib and the straw,—‘ Poverty.’ ”

“ Mary, in exchange for my heart, gives me that of Jesus ; our Venerable Mother, her rule ; Mother Mary of the Divine Heart, her protection.”

She concludes these impressions by a resolution which henceforth sums up the life of the novice and which bears the stamp of her energetic will :

“ I will base my religious life on obedience, with the view of pleasing God by doing His will *lovingly*. I will see Him at once in whomsoever speaks to me, even and indeed especially if the one who speaks is but a simple sister. . . . At the sound of the bell I will reply : ‘ Behold I come, Lord,’ in answer to the words of our Lord, who says to me by its voice : ‘ Arise, My Beloved, and come.’ ”

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At one time, as we have seen, Mme. Kérue! had doubted the possibility of being present at her sister’s clothing, on account of her infant son ; but God did not ask this sacrifice after all, and she was able to accompany the good aunt who had acted as a mother to the two orphans, as well as another aunt from Havre, who were all present at the ceremony.

The Monastery of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd at Angers had been *en fête* from early morning that 30th of September. Ten novices who had completed their novitiate were to pronounce their vows ; and seventeen postulants, of whom Juliette was one, were about to ask the favour of exchanging their worldly attire, in which they

were dressed for the last time, for the white livery of the Order.

Mgr. Rumeau, Bishop of Angers, had accepted, with fatherly kindness, the invitation to preside at the ceremony. At the hour appointed, his Lordship arrived at the convent ; and the happy novices and postulants entered the choir in procession, according to the custom of the community, while the *Ave Maris Stella* was being sung. The Bishop offered the holy sacrifice of the Mass, at which those who were to make their vows and receive the religious habit communicated. Then, the *Veni Sancte Spiritus* having been sung, his Lordship preached for the occasion.

It was the day after the feast of St. Michael, and nearing the eve of that of the Holy Angel Guardians, so, drawing his inspiration from this coincidence, the Bishop gave as his text those words of Holy Scripture : “ Ye shall be as the Angels of God ” ; and showed how by the practice of their vows, and by uniting contemplation to action, the religious of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd could and ought to resemble in very deed on earth the angels of God.

The sermon ended, his Lordship addressed himself to the postulants, and, in reply to his questioning, heard their public expression of the

desire that had brought them to the foot of the altar.

We can without difficulty picture to ourselves with what whole-hearted sincerity Juliette would repeat the customary formula; and never did she in the future belie the solemn declaration thus made in the presence of the representative of Holy Church, as well as of the community and her family:

“One thing I have asked of the Lord, and this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the House of the Lord, and of His holy Mother, all the days of my life . . . and I have chosen humility, poverty, and mortification in the House of the Lord, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners.”

After this declaration, the postulants left the choir to put off their worldly attire, and returned in the white religious habit to receive the veil, rosary, scapular, and mantle, which complete the costume of the Order, the ceremony ending with each of the postulants being given their new name.

By a delicate attention on the part of the Mother-General, Juliette received that of Mary of Mercy, in remembrance of the great favour she had received at Pellevoisin. This was a great joy to her heart, so full of gratitude to Our Blessed Lady, and also

because of the thoughts regarding her new name suggested by her ardent and enthusiastic mind.

A few days later she wrote on this subject—
“*Mercy!*” Say it slowly, gently, almost meditatively. It will express to you the sentiments of gratitude, and still more of confidence, which were mine on September 30, and which I shall ever cherish.

“Take the word in detail : *Misericordia*,—having a heart for the miserable. That heart is Mary’s. Weakness and suffering were the state of the invalid of two years ago. Cured by Our Lady of Pellevoisin, I became the very child of that mother all-merciful, who, opening her arms to me, seemed to say : ‘Thy faults are forgiven ; fear not, but come to the Heart of my Son, the Good Shepherd.’ This name seems to me to be the key of the Divine Heart of Jesus, as well as that of His holy Mother.

“And now I dare ask for all things. Is it not also the key of Heaven ? At the last moment I shall invoke it, and, with such a passport, am sure St. Peter will never be able to close the gate against me. Armed with my name I visit Purgatory, and with utmost confidence say : ‘My Jesus, *mercy!*’ Finally, it leads me to souls, and shows me the love and virtues I must exercise in their regard.”

But what, we may ask, were the interior experiences of the novice on this, the first great day of her religious life? Everything leads us to suppose that her happiness was of the deepest and sweetest character,—a happiness which takes possession of a soul and leaves it in mute admiration before the immensity of God's benefits. Her letters reveal a certain amount; but otherwise she, ordinarily so expansive, seems to have been content that the happy witnesses of her sacrifice should divine her joy; and all we find in her notes, under the entry of September 30, are a few words, probably written in the morning, the motto of a heart which gives itself, without reserve: "I come, my God, to do Thy Will"; then a little further down, doubtless an outburst of gratitude and love in the evening: "My God and my all, Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine. I give myself to Thee wholly, entirely and for ever."

Nor were these mere empty words. During her retreat she had said: "My vocation is to be a religious of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. To become so is my task. All in me ought to tend to this, which is God's Will for me."

We shall see in the next chapter how the young novice strove to respond to this, the Divine Will.

CHAPTER VIII

NOVITIATE

I

IN the Order of the Good Shepherd, as we have said, the novitiate lasts two years. In the first the novices, while being instructed in all the duties of their apostolic work, apply themselves exclusively to the practice of the interior life and all that concerns their spiritual formation according to the spirit of their Institute. It is to this double end that the different novitiate exercises, the instructions, prayer, and spiritual reading are directed. Besides these, they share in the choir duties of the community, from whom they are otherwise entirely separated.

In silence and recollection they begin that life of union and love which will be later the secret of their devotedness and zeal for the salvation of souls. They accustom themselves to see God alone, to seek for Him only, and to work solely for His love and the interests of His glory, acting in all things with purity of intention. The instructions of Blessed John Eudes, and the Venerable



The Novitiate, Angers.

Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia Pelletier, help them to deeply appreciate the sublime end of their vocation. They apply themselves to the study of the constitutions of the Order, especially of the first, which treats of the work of the Institute and the motives which should induce those employed in it to devote themselves whole-heartedly thereto.

Their Blessed Founder puts before them many supernatural considerations well calculated to inflame their zeal, reminding them of God's love for souls and the glory they can give Him by working for this end ; of the value of a soul, which is of more consequence than an entire world, quoting the eloquent words of the Fathers of the Church when treating of this subject, and urging his daughters to "employ their mind and heart, their care and industry, in rendering themselves worthy coadjutors and co-operators with Jesus Christ, our Lord, in the work of the salvation of souls, whom He has redeemed at the price of His blood."

"They should embrace with affection," he continues, "all the sufferings and difficulties which are to be met with in their vocation, for love of Him who suffered so many outrages in this same cause, and by this means endeavour to become true daughters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd."

These considerations inflamed the soul of Sister Mary of Mercy with a holy ardour. She understood them so well, and had such clear and large views of what they involved, that it was impossible to doubt God's designs over her. It was evident He intended her to be a religious of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. From the very commencement of her novitiate, without doing violence to her natural attraction for the contemplative life, her heart rejoiced at the prospect of future fields of devotedness, in which she longed to labour for souls. In the meantime, she loved the calm atmosphere of the novitiate, and the instructions concerning her duties, present and future. She delighted in this time of repose for soul and body, which permitted her to become more intimately united to Jesus, and she made no secret of her supreme happiness.

We find an echo of this in a letter she addressed to her former friend, the Dominican Prioress, Mother Mary de Chantal, shortly after she received the religious habit : " Oh, how good it is to be wearing this veil, which I would not exchange for all the treasures of the world ! . . . We had a magnificent ceremony ; it was quite heavenly, and my relations were charmed with it. What would they have thought could they have seen into souls ? . . .

Mine has never, I believe, been more penetrated by the presence of God. It was as if He was there in His Divine Majesty. . . .

“ Yes, to you I can speak openly from my heart. I have given myself to Him entirely and for ever. Doubtless, as you can well understand, there is scarcely an hour that I do not take something back, but I believe that is only like a speck of dust on the soul, which a good act of love soon clears away. . . . I live in a continual spirit of thanksgiving, which becomes more and more overflowing ; for the better I understand the infinite love the good God has shown and still shows towards me, and which He manifests also in the motherly kindness of our Mothers here, the clearer I see, on the other hand, how little I have corresponded with that love, which all the same has never flagged. Oh, how I love that invocation : ‘ Patience of the Heart of Jesus, weary not of me.’

“ Ask for me from that Divine Heart a profound humility and perfect correspondence with so many graces. . . . Two years more, and then comes my holy profession ! For my part, I look on the profession as simply the signature at the foot of the page. Without it, of course, the deed has no value ; but, at the same time, the act must precede

it, and we must have been found faithful during the two previous years ! ”

Later she wrote again : “ It is already four months since I received the habit. I feel as if I had always been a novice, as so many things remind me of my childhood and my schooldays in the convent. . . . I send you a photograph of the novitiate. Perhaps you will not recognise me, but you will see me in the novice marked with a little black cross on the guimpe. Can you not read in my face all my happiness and the great desire to correspond generously to the grandeur of my vocation ? . . . I feel strongly what a mark of God’s mercy it is. Therefore, do I confide in it and make it my refuge, for it shows me so clearly how little I am, how little I can do, and how little the Institute can expect from me. Oh, had I but profited better by all the advantages provided for me by God’s Providence ! I ought to have learned to suffer, yet I have so little love for the Cross. Nevertheless, I want to love it ; so I hope the Blessed Virgin, my Mother, will obtain this favour for me.”

The beauty of the religious festivals in the convent filled her with admiration, and her letters re-echo her delight in them.

" You ask me what I do, my dear C——. I live under the eye of God in the novitiate between the exercises, occupied in sewing, quite close to our beloved Mistress of Novices. . . .

" Six weeks ago we had three days and nights of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. On the first we rose at midnight. Holy Mass was at 3 a.m., at which we received Holy Communion. Oh, the fervour with which everyone prayed ! One could feel it in the atmosphere. I keep very well, and have to make an effort these days to remember that I ever was so ill. . . ."

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" As to our retreat, I feel powerless to describe it. Eight days of silence in this large monastery ! One felt in very truth that something very solemn was taking place,—the good God's visit to souls. Would you like a little souvenir of that retreat ? The thought I liked best, and which I always recall when our Sisters are saying the rosary, was : ' The rosary said meditatively is a pilgrimage made under the guidance of the Blessed Virgin, the last station of which is in Heaven.' "

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At Christmastide she wrote : " What a beautiful feast we have had ! . . . Mass was at midnight, but how can one describe it ? We began the office at

10 o'clock, and it was 2 a.m. before we went to bed. . . . You have no idea how beautifully the feasts are carried out in a convent of the Good Shepherd. . . . How happy I was! It was such a joy to be at the feet of the Infant Jesus, and to be a child oneself, for a novice is a child. . . . To be near the obedient Jesus, and be living in obedience oneself,—near Jesus in poverty, and to be poor also; near Jesus, suffering and offering Himself for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. . . . and to give oneself to His Heart, to suffer also for souls. . . . Ah, my dear friends, you may guess the rest. . . . Eternity will not be long enough in which to sing the mercies of the good God. I change slightly the words of our Venerable Mother ('I clasp the will of God to my heart'), and say, 'I clasp my vocation to my heart.' "

After her first Easter at Angers, she wrote: "We have had a lovely Holy Week. Oh, how good it is, my God, how good it is to be near Thee! The office, the singing, — how describe their beauty, which did not seem to be of this earth? . . . Then the profound silence in so vast a monastery so full of people. . . . One almost held one's breath, so great was the general recollection. . . . And then the joy of to-day! . . . in addition to which nature itself seems to be keeping high festival; all the trees

are white as snow with blossom, and from their midst comes the delicious singing of birds.”

The annual community retreat mentioned in the above extracts took place between November 12 and 21, about six weeks after Sister Mary of Mercy's clothing. The young novice profited by this occasion to renew the resolutions she had taken in her previous one, before that event, so as to strengthen her will in the pursuit of perfection. She thus sketches in her notes the plan she meant to follow in this holy enterprise: “My perfection will consist in applying myself to do everything in the spirit of generous mortification, and striving to attain complete detachment. With this same object I will avoid and fight against anxiety of mind, interior disquiet, vain fears, and useless thoughts, in order to practise the most absolute recollection.”

“My God, in Thy presence and by Thy inspiration, relying on Thy grace to be faithful to it unto death, in the spirit of love, of sacrifice, and of gratitude to the Heart of Jesus, I choose this motto, in which I wish to sum up all my resolutions: ‘More and more suffering, more and more love.’ Thou didst come to me by the way of the Cross. Give me the grace of going to Thee by that same

road. I therefore take the resolution to refuse Thee nothing, oh, Divine Heart, that I can suffer or which may make me suffer for love of Thee : (1) *In my will*, by obedience. (2) *In my intellect*, by the fight against useless thoughts. In meditation and aridity in prayer I will attach myself strongly to the will of God. (3) *In my heart*, by detachment from the smallest merely natural sentiments either of affection or consolation, above all at recreation. At times when my soul is weary I will go straight to the Sacred Heart and to my Holy Mother. (4) *In my body*, by the warfare against its comfort, its pleasure, its repose, by accepting with joy the privations of religious life, and seeking for myself whatever is most painful, so as to spare the other Sisters. (5) By imposing suffering on myself generously from a motive of love, even in the smallest things.

“ Oh, Divine Heart of Jesus, Thou hast called me, conduct me to Thyself ! I implore of Thee to help me and succour me by Thy grace. I feel weighed down by my nature. Oh, cause it to die, and do Thou Thyself live in me ! Mother most merciful, I place my soul and all my resolutions in thy sacred hands.

“ Mother Mary of the Divine Heart, pray for me.”

We see Sister Mary of Mercy did not forget her two benefactors to whom she owed her restoration to health. She counted on her beloved Mother Mary to continue her protection over the work of her perfection, and, having made her own Sister Mary of the Divine Heart's motto, "More sufferings and more love," she called on her to help her to be faithful to it.

On reading over these resolutions, which may be called a programme for her future, those who knew Sister Mary of Mercy from the first days of her religious life can affirm that she fulfilled them with the utmost exactitude.

Her obedience was perfect, and it was her delight not only to observe the customs of the Order and the requirements of the Rule as she came to know them, but also to submit her views, desires, and judgment to the will of her superiors. Her life of silence, recollection, and prayer, which in no way hindered her ardour for work, was a subject of edification to the Sisters. Her evenness of humour and tranquillity of mind were quite extraordinary; never was she seen to be otherwise than smiling and happy by those who asked a service of her or came in any way in contact with her.

Her piety was amiable and communicative. The Sisters regarded it as a heaven-sent favour to be near

her at recreation. In a wonderfully sweet, but at the same time bright and joyous way she roused souls to fervour without being conscious of it, and all felt the better for having been near her. Her virtue was so attractive that all loved it. It was said that she realised to the letter the last lines of some pious and interesting verses she had learnt by heart and recited in the novitiate on the occasion of the Mistress of Novices' feast, entitled "The Saint and his Shadow," and which ended with the words: "Let us be saints, my Sisters, but let us not be conscious of it."

In fact, every day she made some step forward, of which she herself was ignorant. In her humility she accused herself of what she termed her cowardice, her want of energy and determination, as well as of constancy in the fulfilment of her duties; whereas the other Sisters were so edified by her fidelity that they were striving to imitate her. If, when giving an account of her actions, her mistress happened to say a thing would be better done otherwise, she would at once reply, "Ah, that is true, dear Mother; next time I will do it better."

If, to put her virtue to the test, or simply for edification's sake, her mistress were to say to her in particular: "Sister Mary of Mercy, you have failed in such a rule, or committed such and such

a fault at the office," she would at once answer, smilingly: "It is quite possible, dear Mother; I am so heedless and imperfect; but I do want to correct myself."

One day she said to a Sister: "I have been seeking to know what humility really is, and my soul was never satisfied until it came to understand that humility is a light." It was then in the rays of that light that her proficiency in that beautiful virtue became so marked that the memory of it is still cherished in the novitiate and the various departments in which she was employed.

From her humility sprang also her charity; and if she loved God beyond all else, she none the less faithfully practised the second part of the first great commandment. She loved her neighbour as herself, or rather more than herself, always aiming at self-forgetfulness in order to console or give pleasure to her Sisters, taking care at the same time to be impartial in her affections. Knowing that one of her Sister Novices greatly desired to have a *Little Breviary of the Sacred Heart*, she obtained permission at Christmastide to give one to each of her companions, not wishing to do more for one than for the others.

In the world she had striven to communicate to others her own love of the Sacred Heart of

Jesus. In the Good Shepherd Convent she found it was held in high honour, as was fitting amongst the daughters of Blessed John Eudes, who was declared by Leo XIII. to be "the first apostle and author of the liturgical cultus of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary," and by Pius X. to be "the father, the doctor, and the apostle" of that devotion.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus became more and more Sister Mary of Mercy's delight, and, rejoicing in the honour paid to it, she constituted herself His faithful companion in the Blessed Sacrament.

In thought she kept ever close to the tabernacle where Jesus as a victim was the model she tried to reproduce in herself, and towards which all the aspirations of her soul converged.

It was in these holy dispositions and the constant practice of such virtues that the two years' novitiate of Sister Mary of Mercy passed by.

The study of the vows of religion held a large place in her interior life. She pondered over them in her meditations and in her Communions; she eagerly listened to the instructions that were given on the subject; above all, she exercised herself in their practice.

We have already spoken of her obedience, nor

was she less exact in the observance of poverty. With an almost passionate love for the common life, she was never so happy as when she had to suffer some privation. It happened one day that she found she had by her a little store of linen which had been put in her cell for her use, but which she had not needed.

At first she felt somewhat pleased, thinking that, should she get a cold, she would not need, for once, to ask permission for extra handkerchiefs; but, quickly seeing that such a thought was prompted by nature, she at once took her little treasures to the linen room, reserving only the amount usually distributed to each religious for the week.

Everything she had for her use was poor. Someone having one day offered to sharpen her pencil, which was almost square at the point, she refused, saying it would do very well as it was, and that it would be contrary to poverty to sharpen it unnecessarily. . . . In having Jesus she had enough. In this spirit she once wrote to her sister: "The religious who wishes to possess our *All* should have *nothing*, or as little as possible. And you know I desire this *All* with my whole heart." The virtue of poverty, however, caused her many a struggle; for her large heart, which desired nothing for itself, would still have loved to bestow on others the

pleasures she herself was ready enough to sacrifice, and the restrictions of the virtue of poverty were then very painful to her. These were, perhaps, the only occasions when she seemed to find obedience hard; but how well she understood its obligations, and how generously and even joyously she accepted that which cost her heart so much.

Chastity, which from her childhood had had a charm for her, appeared now daily more precious in her eyes on account of her vocation, by which she was to labour to restore that beautiful virtue to erring souls; and the fourth vow made by the religious of the Good Shepherd to labour for the salvation of these poor souls stimulated her zeal for her own sanctification.

The health of Sister Mary of Mercy's little nephew, which had caused such anxiety to his parents at the time of her clothing, far from improving, became steadily worse, and in her letters she strove to raise her sister to her own high level of conformity to God's will. Writing before the Lent of 1908, on the feast of the Purification, she says: "I cannot withdraw my thoughts from the Holy Family in the Temple. The Blessed Virgin holding the Infant Jesus in her arms reminds me of you with your little one, called like the sweet Jesus to suffer,

and it seems to me those words of Holy Simeon could be addressed to you : ' A sword of sorrow shall pierce thy soul.' That sorrow is already in your heart, my dear one ; I can read it in every word of your letter.

" The cross appears to me more and more to be the foundation, the basis of our life. We deceive ourselves when we count on joys and forget that in Heaven alone we shall find rest.

" Try to deepen your devotion to Our Lady, the Mother of Sorrows ; make your meditations on her joys and her dolors, and you will see what strength you will draw from them.

" You see before you many long years of inevitable suffering. Well, then, think of the Holy Mother of Jesus, who knew of the Cross awaiting her Son, and who knew, through Holy Scripture, that one day all His bones would be counted ! . . . What strength you will gain from that thought also !

" We are passing through a time when it seems as if the friends of the Divine Heart of Jesus hear these words : ' Could you not watch one hour with Me ? ' He suffers ; our country is offending Him. . . . Let us make generous reparation without considering that the price is the object of our tenderest affections. . . ."

When the poor parents had lost all hope of saving their child, her words take a still higher flight.

“ You suffer with your little one,—ah ! there is the divine money which saves souls ! To do good without suffering is like whistling to the wind. I did not understand that so well a year ago. If I had, I should have profited better by so many and such big crosses, and lightened yours at the same time ! ”

When, in April 1908, God saw fit to take to Himself this little victim, the child of so many hopes and fears, Juliette’s loving and sympathetic heart overflowed in tender compassion for her grief-stricken sister, to whom she wrote :

“ We are closely united, are we not, in this sorrowful yet sacred time, for it is the hour of God’s visitation. Our little angel had scarce put a foot on earth, and now he is already singing the praises of the good God. For him it is the *Magnificat*, for us the *Stabat Mater*, especially for you, my dearest one, whose sorrow is re-echoed in my heart. . . . Never have you been so dear to me.

“ But the Heart of Jesus is always our sacred bond of union, where our hearts meet, especially when He has asked of us the dear little soul of whom He was jealous. Last night during the office

of Matins I felt I was singing Our Lady's praises together with our dear little one. . . . But at other times I see you all three by the empty cradle, and can see you, my darling, clasping to your heart the will of God, who has asked you to sacrifice what was almost a part of yourself. . . . What would you not do for the Sacred Heart? Offer to It, yourselves, your little lamb, and rejoice in having been chosen to give one angel more to Heaven. . . .

"This is truly a 'Holy Week.' Oh, let us think of the dolors of Mary; and while your tears fall as you fold up the linen and clothing of the little darling, think of those same sorrows being sanctified so long ago by the Heart of Mary, that incomparable martyr of maternal love!

"Approach the Holy Table, and the Heart of Jesus will tell you that he who has left you loves you more than ever.

"Your grief has penetrated the very depth of my heart,—a grief seen by God and His beloved Mother only, who read souls, and know, too, their inward tears; but we did not take an empty heart to the foot of the Cross. You will see one day what a fruitful seed of eternal life are the tears of Christian resignation."

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II

In October 1908, Juliette was sent for some hours daily to the penitents' quarters, so as to have, as far as possible, experimental knowledge of the work.

She was charged with the superintendence of the correspondence with their families and with the catechetical instructions given to the newcomers. She applied herself to these duties with her characteristic ardour and kindheartedness, as well as tact and devotedness. She was not long amongst these dear children, who appreciated, and still remember, her great love for their souls, but she showed in that short time what her mind and heart were capable of in carrying out the work of the Order.

"I have come to the Good Shepherd to save souls," she used to say; and she certainly loved them with all sincerity. "Not only did we feel at ease when she was near," said one of the Magdalens, who had known her when with the penitents, "but still more we felt she loved us. At the same time, we were very sure that this affection sprang from her love of God and of souls for His sake. And on that very account each one felt convinced that the affection of which she was the object was very deep and real."

Another penitent, who also became a Magdalen, cannot sufficiently express her gratitude to her whom she calls her "Good Mother Mary of Mercy." When in the class she asked one day, when under the influence of a violent temptation to discouragement and annoyance, for paper on which to write and ask her parents to come and take her away. The tone in which she made the demand at once let the novice see that there was nothing to be done at the moment but accede to the request, which she did. . . . While the poor excited child was writing with feverish haste not far from her, Sister Mary of Mercy went on calmly with her work, glancing at her from time to time, and inwardly praying for her. Two days later, not having had any reply, the child applied again for what was needful for writing again. "That is useless," quietly replied the novice. "See, here is your first letter."

"What! Mother, did you not send it?"

"No, I placed it at Our Lady's feet, certain that she would change your dispositions, and that then you would regret having written it. However, if you really want it to go, come and tell me so after Vespers, and I will send it to-day."

"It is useless to wait. I tell you now that I shall not change my mind," was the reply. But before a few hours were over, Our Blessed Lady had touched

this wayward heart, and Sister Mary of Mercy had the joy of seeing her come for her letter, in order to destroy it. She had played the part of a guardian angel to this soul, and had the consolation of having ensured her perseverance. E—— set herself resolutely to doing her duty. One day the good novice said to her :

“ E——, our Lord loves you much, and has designs over your soul. You will become a Magdalen.”

“ Never will I be one ! ” impetuously exclaimed the young girl. About a year later, on the very day Sister Mary of Mercy was named Second Mistress of Magdalens, the day, that is, after her profession, E—— entered as a postulant amongst them.

CHAPTER IX

NOVICE AND VICTIM

I

THE annual retreat for the community was preached in 1908 by the Rev. Father Lemius. We may remember it was he who stirred up Juliette's zeal in spreading around her, while in the world, her favourite devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Thus it was a delicate attention on the part of Providence to arrange that her soul should once more come in touch with this fervent religious.

This retreat opened up fresh outlooks to her fervour, and seems to have led her soul into the special path God had destined for her when calling her to the religious state.

One day in her instructions the Mistress of Novices had told her hearers that they were like pieces of wood selected by the Divine Artisan to form an object destined for His service ; that consequently they must suffer themselves to be cut,

fashioned, and shaped by the hand of the Celestial Sculptor, Who alone would direct the blows of the hammer on the chisel destined to give them the form desired by His Heart. Immediately after the instruction, Sister Mary of Mercy went to her mistress, and, with the impetuosity of her loving soul, said : “ Dear Mother, make a tabernacle of me.” To be the tabernacle of the Victim whom she knew by faith to be Jesus Himself, to give Him shelter, and keep Him in her heart so as to live close to Him, this had hitherto been her great aim ; but from the time of this retreat she was not content to be the tabernacle of her Beloved. She wished to consummate her union with Him, and be herself a victim with the Divine Victim Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

The notes which Sister Mary of Mercy left of this retreat make known to us how she received her first lights as to this holy desire of her soul. After one of the meditations of the second day, on the Holy Eucharist, she wrote : “ Just as Jesus Christ makes choice in harvest-time of the grains of wheat and the grapes that are to be transformed into Himself, so does He choose hearts which He wishes to make His present and eternal dwelling. May these suffer themselves to be so closely united to Jesus that soon there will remain only the

species or appearance of their former being! . . . Oh, Jesus, the host cannot feel or desire its Consecration, but I—I love Thee, and call Thee to me! Come and reign in my heart, and transform me into Thee.”

During the following days she added: “I feel that a new life is about to open out before me,—a life prepared for, long years ago: first by vague aspirations, then more definitely, and finally by the great grace of November, 1902. Since then all my interior life has tended towards this end,—union.

“Since my entrance into the novitiate there has been an irresistible drawing to the tabernacle, also to meditations on the Divine Victim: meditations full of sweetness, light, and strength. Finally, this attraction grew stronger from the beginning of the retreat; and now I believe and am confident that Jesus has chosen His victim.—Love and thanksgiving to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”

To be a victim with Jesus was the resolution she took at the end of the retreat, and we have before us the terms in which she expressed it: “On Monday evening, during the instruction, having long pondered over my resolution the previous night and all through the day, suddenly, without my knowing how, the thought came to me:

‘Victim of Contemplation—Victim of Sacrifice—Victim of Communion.’ That comprises my whole future programme. From its realisation I see issuing the light concerning my duties towards God, my neighbour, and myself.

“*Victim of Contemplation.*—Daily union in meditation, union in prayer, Communion prepared for and continued. Spirit of faith. God *in* all—God the *end* of all—God the *means* to all.

“Life of abandonment to Him, of calm and peace : life of silence, of mortification of the senses, of the eyes and heart above all. To listen more than speak : to look more at Him than at myself. To love Him, to love Him above everything, and never suffer my heart to grow cold, even during the night. . . . Oh, Jesus ! . . . Work done with Him, in Him, for Him,—prayer of the heart, a simple look at Him interiorly, even, or rather above all, when with the children ! And also at recreation, so that I may not talk of myself or go too far in other ways.

“*Victim of Sacrifice.*—In the morning at holy Mass, give myself to God, generously, bravely, and with the utmost love ; accept all the trials and repugnances to be met during the day, and all one’s work and want of success. Total abandonment to the designs of the Divine Heart of my

Jesus, receiving and observing obedience as a desire of His Heart,—and then what would anything cost me?

“ *Victim of Sacrifice*, by making my will die to everything. No more of me or mine; no more self-interests, no more possessions, no more desires of giving or receiving, no more seeking my own ease. Love to be in want of something, either for soul or body. . . . Suffer with energy and joy. Cause joy and happiness to radiate around me. Seek self in nothing. Preserve calm and peace in spite of difficulties and incapacity, and pray with love and confidence.

“ *Victim of Sacrifice* for self and for Thee, Oh, my Jesus, having in view the interests of God, of the Church, of France, the consecrated and sinners; His glory, His reign, His love.

“ *Victim of Sacrifice, of humility*.—Be the host in a ciborium of gold or of glass, in a tabernacle poor or precious, in a monstrance rich or simple, it always preserves its humility, its littleness. All for Jesus! . . . and who thinks much of the appearance of bread? . . .

“ *Victim of Communion*. — The host having received Jesus, and given itself up to Him, gives Him to others, and itself disappears. It gives Him at every hour of the day and night to whomsoever

wishes for Him ; and, whatever happens, remains there,—there on the altar, there in a lonely tabernacle. . . . It gives Jesus to all gives Him sweetly without asking aught in return ; wholly and entirely to a little child, whole and entire to all ; and goes wherever it is carried. . . . This *It* is Jesus, and Jesus is *It*. Jesus in the Host, Jesus the Victim, to Thee may the incense of our love ascend !

“ My incense for Jesus is suffering. . . . Always more suffering and more love.”

These pages are signed : “ The Victim of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”

She presented her plans for the future to the Rev. Father Lemius, who confirmed them by these words, written in his own hand on the memoranda of the fervent novice :

“ Yes, be a victim, a whole-hearted victim, holy, living, pleasing unto God : be ever enclosed in the true and living ciborium, — the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Live by contemplation, in Him ; sanctify yourself, with His help ; feed your soul on Him. . . . Be faithful to grace until death.”

The good Father had himself been pleased to find her in the house of God ; and on the closing day of the retreat, when he came, according to custom, to pay a farewell visit to the community, in company

with Mgr. Pasquier, Superior of the Monastery, and the Rev. Chaplains, he noticed Sister Mary of Mercy, and pointed her out to Monseigneur, saying : " That one there is my child " ; and he gladly exchanged a few words with her on the subject of their first meeting.

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After this retreat, Sister Mary of Mercy thought only of preparing for her holy Profession by fidelity to her programme, adapting it to the requirements of the rule and the duties of her employments. A few weeks later, at the end of December, she was appointed to assist the Sister Procuratrix in her work.

It was a great sacrifice to her to leave the children, but she did not let anyone even suspect her regrets, and went joyously to work at her new employment.

When writing to her sister for the New Year, she mentions the change, in her own bright way : " I am no longer amongst the children, but in the department of the community procuratrix, and am about as much a procuratrix as the blower is an organist ! . . . This work has all to do with material things. . . . Pray that in the midst of so much that is material I may not become too material myself ! But the apartment is close to

the choir door. I do not want to grow cold when so near the fire ! ”

She continued in this employment till the end of her novitiate, and certainly her first fervour was in no way cooled. She used to say, laughingly, that the best times of the day were when she was sent on messages ; for then, having nothing to distract her, she could converse interiorly with Jesus, while coming and going through the house. Redoubling her fidelity in proportion as she advanced in Divine love, her one thought was to prepare her soul for that union with her Divine Spouse, which she was longing to seal by her vows. Her letters are full of what so filled her heart and mind.

Writing at the beginning of the year to one of her aunts at Havre, she said : “ It is a sacrifice not to see you all, but one must have something to offer to the Good God ! It is so good to be near Him that I wonder sometimes where are to be found all those sacrifices of the religious life of which some people talk so much. . . . I can assure you, that had I understood sooner what God’s love is for us, and the happiness of a religious who lives only to love Him and make Him loved, I should have been in a convent ten years ago. . . . This year my Profession, I hope, will take place, and it is my constant thought

and sweetest joy. I recommend this matter to your good prayers. . . . My health is excellent. I follow the rule without any exceptions and I love it more and more."

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"I recommend to you the great question of my Profession," she wrote to another, at the same time. "Above all, that when it comes I may give myself up wholly and entirely, and be ready for anything. . . . Do pray that our Lord may accept my sacrifice, and have the goodness to unite my heart to His. . . . Twenty-nine months to-day since my cure! . . . and what perfect health I have had since then!"

As we see by these extracts from her letters, Sister Mary of Mercy's health had kept up till now, without a break, from the time of the favour she had received at Pellevoisin. But in the spring of this year a little incident occurred which for the time caused some anxiety to her superiors. When occupied with her usual work, she one day, without any apparent cause, brought up a little blood. She at once went to her Mistress of Novices, who took her to the infirmary, where she was attended to. There was no repetition of the bleeding, and the doctor who was consulted found nothing whatever wrong with her lungs, nor had she any rise of

temperature, so after a week's rest she returned to her usual occupations. Nevertheless, Sister Mary of Mercy thought she saw in this incident a warning from Heaven, and a sign that Jesus had accepted her offer of her life as a victim. Silently she rejoiced over it, only desiring that she should not die before she had been united to our Lord by her holy vows. The Divine Spouse seemed pleased to accede to this wish of His little servant, and soon, seeing her as active and devoted as before, those around her felt reassured. She had often expressed this longing for Heaven to her confessor and mistress ; but as they discouraged it, she had submitted, and striven to check her thirst to see God. But, if her soul tried thus to obey, the slightest little incident sufficed to renew her hope. . . . On the eve of May 1, she drew, together with the other novices, a flower as an offering to Mary during her month, and got the " Cornflower," the practice being " Desire for Heaven. . . ." This caused a fresh struggle and renewed efforts to submit to those who had the guidance of her soul. But in the depth of her heart there was the presentiment that Jesus meant to bring to pass what she had written in her notebook the first day of her last retreat : " Death is *Union*. To die is to lay one's head on the Heart of Jesus. It is to be carried to Him by the

angels, to see Him for the first time, to possess Him, our Beloved, for ever."

There were about this period manifold rejoicings in the community on the occasion of the Beatification of Blessed John Eudes, the founder of the Order. The decree was proclaimed in the basilica of St. Peter at Rome, by our Holy Father Pope Pius X., on April 25, 1909. The Mother-General, the Assistant General, the Provincials of France and many other provinces, together with several other religious, went to Rome for the occasion, with whom all at Angers were united in spirit. By a coincidence which greatly rejoiced the community, the Beatification took place on Good Shepherd Sunday, the second Sunday after Easter.

On June 24, 25, and 26, a solemn Triduum in honour of the new *Beatus* was celebrated in the mother-house at Angers. All hearts rejoiced, and still more was every soul filled with a holy fervour. Sister Mary of Mercy, who was so deeply attached to her Order, was very much struck and moved by these solemnities, and love and gratitude towards her Blessed Father increased greatly in her heart.

About this time Mme. Kérue! was expecting the birth of a child to fill the void left when little Peter took his flight to Heaven. It had been proposed, in the event of its being a boy, that he should

be called Yves. Sister Mary of Mercy, who had written the previous year to her sister, saying, "We are making the novena to St. Anne, and I am asking for you a little son," now wrote, begging that the child might be called John, which was agreed to, and a few days later the new-born babe was placed under the protection of Blessed John Eudes.

Sister Mary of Mercy wrote for the occasion : "I cannot offer any present to little John : but what could be given to one who rests in our Lord's arms ? . . . However, if you would like, I can send you something that you could look upon as a relic of his Blessed Patron, and would be careful to put in a little bag like an Agnus Dei, and fasten it to his medals, so that he could keep it all his life, in a spirit of faith, which would, I am sure, bring him many graces through the hands of our Blessed Father. During the Triduum an altar was erected, surmounted by his statue, and on which the Blessed Sacrament reposed. The flowers which adorned it were distributed by our Mother to 'his dear children,' and it is a little rose leaf that I enclose in my letter.

"A rose leaf ! What a little thing ! But that flower was blessed by our Lord, who knows so well our intentions, and can hide His All-powerful

love under such tiny appearances. May this fragile souvenir never pass out of his hands."

In this way Sister Mary of Mercy always strove to imbue her relatives with her own sentiments, and to make them sharers in the spiritual goods of her religious family. But the various events narrated above in no way interfered with her earnest preparation for the great day of her Profession; and the nearer it approached, the more intense became her desires, as we shall see by her letter to the venerable old friend M. D——, who had taken so warm an interest in her since she was little more than a child, when he first met her at Cauterets, where he was so touched by the delicate attentions with which she used to surround him, and to whom, since the death of her parents, he had been almost as a second father, while she on her side always looked up to him with quite filial affection.

On July 27, 1909, she wrote: "My mind and my heart are much taken with a matter that is of the utmost importance, as well as very dear to me. Yes, the great day so long desired is approaching, and is, in fact, very near. Oh, how I hope that the Heart of Jesus will do me the 'Mercy' to allow me to make my Profession, though I cannot but feel sad when I think what a poor acquisition I shall be to our dear Institute! I only

ask of Him a little corner in the shade, which is the only place I am fit for ; for I can assure you, without any false humility, that I come to Him having nothing but the love of souls. . . . But, all the same, I keep on hoping, and saying unceasingly to myself, in order to stir up my confidence : ‘ My God, you have wished for me, even as I am, so little good for anything ! May You be praised for it. But then I want to labour to win souls to You, if not by the work of my hands, at any rate by that of my soul. I want to sanctify myself, and to love and make You much loved, by sacrifice and prayer, and finally by a life of perfect union with that of Your Heart.’ More than ever do I ask your prayers. Yes, ask Jesus and Mary to pour forth their gifts of mercy and love into my soul ; to bring it about that, in the midst of all the sorrows with which the Church is overwhelmed and their Hearts have suffered, this soul, however unworthy it may be, may give itself up wholly, generously, and for ever, to the sole object of loving and serving them, and being continually immolated for their glory : that this soul may enter thoroughly into the spirit of the real poverty and obedience that were their lot on earth. Do ask, dear M——, that my soul, in spite of its unworthiness and littleness, may become their consolation and the place of their

abode ; that I may be strong, fervent, generous, spending myself without counting the cost, and wholly abandoned to the adorable designs of Providence : finally, that I may be faithful to the Rule until death. I feel that in these days, more than in any other, people ought not to be half-and-half religious. Moreover, religious of the Good Shepherd, by their fourth vow, undertake the care of souls, and how dear this vow is to our hearts ! ”

She said much the same to the Reverend Mother de Chantal : “ You know, without my insisting on it, that for your child it is at all times a hard trial, ‘ according to nature,’ to be separated from you ; but, ‘ according to grace,’ I have never been so near to you, for your life is in God, and mine in a few days will be fixed there irrevocably. If you approve, it is in that centre we will live united with that union which will never end.

“ Yes, I am almost on the eve of my much longed-for Profession. . . . I can truly say it is my one thought and the inspiring motive of all my actions. To be a religious of the Good Shepherd is to vow one’s life directly for the salvation of souls. I have the tenderest love for my dear vocation, given me so providentially with my restored health ; for when I promised to enter the Good Shepherd Order, I did not know it. When I arrived,

it was both a joy and a surprise to find how the Rule and spirit, even in the smallest customs, responded to the desires of my heart, and thus to realise how I myself had been for so long in preparation for it. . . . Perhaps the day after my Profession I may have to say farewell to the novitiate and all the deep and pure affections that bind me to it but that will be *after* the great day, and then the Good God will be with me."

In proportion as Sister Mary of Mercy's union with her Divine Spouse grew more intimate, so did her affection for those dear to her become strengthened and purified. "How good it is," she wrote, "to love each other in God, and to find again in Him those who are dear to us! That is the impression made on me by your last visit. . . .

"All is summed up in this : To love each other while speaking of the Good God ; to love each other in loving Him ; to be content, whatever He may send us ; mistrusting ourselves, but daring all things with His help, keeping our souls pure while waiting for Heaven."

II

Not wishing to lose any opportunity of rendering her soul less unworthy of the happiness to which she aspired, Sister Mary of Mercy resolved to pre-

pare for the beautiful feast of the Assumption by a special interior retreat, in accordance with her particular attraction, offering herself each day to Jesus as a victim through Mary's hands. But, as she did nothing without the sanction of obedience, she drew up her plan under the guidance of Our Blessed Lady, and submitted it to her mistress, who quite approved of it, for she knew well Sister Mary of Mercy would satisfy her pious aspirations not only without making herself singular or sacrificing the duties of the common life or the requirements of her employments; but that, on the contrary, these very duties would be the means she would use to accomplish her holy enterprise.

We give here the programme the fervent novice traced out for her soul during this retreat, in which she makes Jesus Himself ask for what she herself had resolved to give Him :

“ All for Jesus, the Victim in the Sacred Host, through Mary Immaculate.”

“ Begin from this day the retreat I ask of you. Make a retreat as a victim dwelling in the Divine Host, in the Blessed Sacrament, listening to His instructions, steeping yourself, and letting yourself be permeated with the Spirit of that Victim, nourishing your soul with the Sacred Host, praying, suffering, thinking, acting as a victim, forgetting

self, renouncing self, immolating and sacrificing self, and letting yourself be immolated and sacrificed as a victim.

“ *The first day*, be to Me a victim of *annihilation*, thinking only of and united to the annihilations of the Victim in the Sacred Host, abasing yourself as He does, pondering over and delighting in your humiliation : calling to mind whatever there is in yourself that renders you contemptible in your own eyes or those of others ; ruminating over it very thoroughly, so as to make it the food of your mind and heart.

“ *The second day*, be to Me a victim of *expiation* for your own sins, for those of My Priests, and of the entire world, willingly bearing with Me their crushing weight ; drinking the bitter dregs of the chalice of iniquity, and letting yourself be trodden down and bruised under the pressure of Divine justice, for the crimes of the world : praying for unfortunate sinners, cancelling with the gold of suffering their immense debts.

“ *The third day*, strive to be a victim of *reparation* and *satisfaction*, trying to render to God the glory of which the wicked strive to deprive Him. Offering Him earnest reparation for each of their outrages, and for each of their acts of rebellion and ingratitude an act of submission and gratitude,

of oblation and immolation of your whole being, by the spirit of sacrifice.

“ *The fourth day*, be to Me a victim of *praise*, opposing incessantly to the insults, blasphemies, and maledictions which the impious are continually pouring forth against the Lord, praise and adoration in spirit and truth ; causing to ascend to the Sacred Victim in the Host, and through Him to the throne of the adorable Trinity, an uninterrupted hymn of love and glory ; praising and exalting in sorrow, as well as joy, the mercy, goodness, wisdom, and all the other perfections and attributes of the Divinity, incessantly breathing forth the loving *Amen* of adherence and perfect submission.

“ *The fifth day*, be to Me a victim of *thanksgiving* for the immense and innumerable benefits poured forth over the earth by My liberality, for the generous and special gifts of My royal munificence, for the natural and supernatural favours I have lavished upon you, for the treasures with which I have enriched you through suffering, and especially for the incomprehensible love which has made Me your victim, and you Mine. Sing, therefore, with ever-increasing love and gratitude, ‘ *Magnificat ! Deo gratias ! Alleluia !* ’

“ *The sixth day*, be My victim of *love*. Love your Jesus as He loves you. He loves you with

a love which immolates itself and everything else for the object beloved : with disinterested love, which gives up all consolation, repose, and joy, for the consolation, repose, and joy of its Well-Beloved : with a love which can never be satisfied as long as there remains anything yet to be given or sacrificed to love : with the love of a victim, which is alone worthy of the Divine Victim of love.

“ *The seventh day*, be My sacerdotal victim. How white and pure, devoted, and generous should be the victim of the holy Priesthood ! How holy and perfect the victim of the Sovereign High Priest ! She has to expiate, repair, implore, complete, and supply for the victim of the Priesthood,—the victim of *the Priest par excellence*. How unsparing should she be of self, how wholly and unceasingly immolated !

“ My true sacerdotal victim will be all that for My Priests. Be all that for your Great High Priest for your adorable Victim in whom you are as a victim.

“ *The eighth day*, be My eucharistic victim. Following the example of the Sacred Host in the tabernacle, remain enclosed in My living tabernacle and ciborium in your heart : remain there recollected, silent, and hidden ; hidden from the eyes of all and your own eyes, under the veils of obscurity,

weariness, powerlessness, inaction, and incapacity. Like the Sacred Host, and in union with It, be the salvation of sinners, the consolation of the afflicted, the support of the weak, the advocate, mediatrix, and surety,—the victim of all.

“ Like the Host of the Divine Banquet, be to others as food which sustains, re-animates, strengthens, sanctifies, and vivifies.

“ Like the Host in the Monstrance, radiate on all around you the sweetness of Him who dwells within you, whose goodness you should make manifest while remaining hidden yourself.

“ Be a true eucharistic victim for souls, and still more for your Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

“ *The ninth day, and always, be a victim united to and one with the Divine Victim, consumed and perfected.*”

The authorisation Sister Mary of Mercy had received to make this novena had filled her with intense joy; and, as with everything that brought her happiness in the spiritual life, she was overflowing with lively gratitude towards the Divine Master. She did it in union with Our Blessed Lady; and on the eve of its completion made the following act in her own name and that of all those who were to be professed with her: “ Oh, my Mother, when leaving this earth, thou didst leave there thy

treasure,—thy Jesus, the Victim in the Sacred Host. Oh, give Him to us! Our souls will guard Him, will love Him, console Him, win souls to Him, and will suffer and sacrifice self for Him.

“Give Him to us, that He may possess our minds, our wills, our hearts. Furthermore, give us your own virtues and love, that we may please Him. Oh, Mother, give Him to us! He is our life. We will live no more but by Him, in Him, for Him.”

On the beautiful feast of the Assumption, she addressed herself thus to her Heavenly Mother: “Thou hast given me my Jesus, the Divine Victim in the Sacred Host, this morning. Oh, Mother, I will keep Him, I promise thee! I will keep Him in the way thou dost wish. Be thou, my Mother, for ever blest.”

This retreat in union with the Divine Victim ended, Sister Mary of Mercy, in order to preserve in her soul the dispositions in which she then found herself, proposed to make the time that intervened before her Profession one uninterrupted retreat, as we learn from her notes.

Under the date of August 22, she wrote: “Yesterday our Reverend Chaplain again assured me that all this comes from the Good God; that I must follow this special attraction, and work into it my preparation for my Profession. What peace

and happiness are mine. . . . and how I am drawn to the tabernacle! Jesus the Divine Victim wholly absorbs me. . . . To-day I begin the distant preparation (on the same lines as the recent retreat) for my Profession.

“Can it be true? Five weeks more, and then Jesus will come. And I, too, am going to Him. Meditations, Masses, Communions are all full of the same thought and directed to the same end: to prepare, from this time forth, my soul, heart, and mind to be the victim of Jesus. I will then, helped by His loving grace and mercy, make my profession of being for ever the victim of Jesus in the Sacred Host,—a victim consecrated to His love, and which He will immolate according to His good pleasure. Now, I may venture to write this, to think it really and believe it truly, and my duty is henceforth to correspond generously and faithfully with this grace, for it is undoubtedly the spirit of the Good God, of our Blessed Father Eudes, and our Venerable Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia, who has left us these beautiful words: ‘How well filled is the life of a religious of the Good Shepherd, who tenderly loves her vocation, and offers herself each day to God as a living victim for souls, and who thinks of nothing but of being pleasing to Him.’ And you, my sweet, holy, beloved Mother Mary,

behold here the heart of your child, her soul, mind, and body : I received them all from you, three years ago, and now I bring them all back to offer and consecrate them to you, begging you to employ them for the glory and love of Jesus, and for the salvation of souls. May my life henceforth, beloved Mother, be one continual thanksgiving for your benefits.

“It was solely for Jesus that you cured me, and it is for Him alone I want to live. . . . The day is approaching when our consecration to and union with Him will take place. Oh, Mother, I cast myself into your arms and your Heart, trusting myself entirely to you, for I am *frightened* ! Jesus is so holy, the Holy One of God, and yet He desires to have me. Mother Most Merciful, do you prepare your child, purify, and make her ready. Do with her, and in her, whatever you please. You know, my Mother, that I want to be holy, and give myself entirely and for ever and above all to respond to the adorable designs of Jesus over me. Mother, dearest, bless every moment which separates me from the one which will unite me to Jesus ; may every beating of my heart be an act of desire and love ; every step, occupation, or action so many prayers and acts of atonement. I abandon myself to you. Prepare

with your own pure hands, oh, Mary, Jesus' little victim. Blot out, I beg of you, the past. . . .

“ My God, how happy I am ! Yes, my vows will really consecrate me a victim,—poverty, chastity, obedience, desire for souls. What a depth of meaning in that thought ! How I must hasten to be pure, like Jesus in the Sacred Host ; poor like Him, obedient like Him, unceasingly immolated like Him, and *for the same ends* ! . . . And it is I—I who have offended Thee, oh, my God, who preferred creatures to Thee for so long, who feel this intense love in my heart. Yes, my Jesus, I believe that I do love Thee now, with this whole-hearted love. So I come, I come to Thee with my sweet Mother.”

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Some days after having written these lines, Sister Mary of Mercy was authorised to make, according to the custom of the Order, her petitions to be admitted to the holy Profession to all the religious who compose the Council of the Congregation. She had also on this occasion the consolation of being able to speak, more intimately than she had hitherto done, to the Mother-General, who nevertheless knew her dear daughter well. Sister Mary of Mercy opened her heart to her freely, telling her of all the graces she had received in the past, as well as in the present, and of her longings

for high sanctity. She spoke, too, of the particular attraction by which she felt drawn to realise them, without at all neglecting the obligations of her employment and the duties of the common life. "If you were to tell me," said the Mother-General, "that your devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and your union with the Divine Victim in the Sacred Host would interfere with the duties imposed on you by your vocation, I should be suspicious of it. But when such an attraction leads you to fulfil your duties better, and helps to perfecting your actions, it certainly comes from God; and it is undoubtedly He who gives you the grace of realising what others try to picture to themselves through their imagination."

"Then, dear Mother, I may make my Profession in this sense, and call myself the 'living victim of Jesus.' " "Not only at your Profession, but throughout your whole life," replied the Mother-General.

Sister Mary of Mercy was filled to overflowing with joy at receiving so full an approbation of her pious desires, and awaited with holy impatience the hour when the community would do her the favour of receiving her to the Holy Profession. It was on August 30 that she and her companions received this assurance, and there remained only one month now for immediate preparation. Her

gratitude knew no bounds, and she felt the necessity of imparting it to those interested in her happiness. To M. D—— she wrote: “Yesterday our Sisters and myself were told that our dearest hopes would be realised, and I feel I must write to you at once and let you share my happiness. The Good God, in His mercy, has admitted me to the Holy Profession and to the immeasurable happiness of giving myself to Him with my whole soul. You may imagine, my dear M——, how deep and tender are my feelings, and what sentiments pervade a heart to which God gives Himself, and who gives itself to Him. My future life, then, will be spent close to the tabernacle,—that is my centre, my *All*. Oh, ask our Lord for me a great and ever greater love for the Blessed Sacrament,—a love springing from a lively and ardent faith, a love devoted and generous, and ever increasing to the last moment of my life! . . .”

She wrote also to her good Aunt Matilda: “We have all been received,—that is to say, eighteen novices. . . . You may imagine our happiness. The Profession will take place on the 30th (September). We shall go into retreat eight days previously; and then no more letters, no other thought than that of the great and holy act we are going to perform.”

To her father's old friend, of whom we have spoken so often, she wrote again just before the great day :

" I have asked our dear Lord to let His grace take the place of a letter from me, to remove from your mind all suspicion of forgetfulness on my part, and to make Himself more and more your true friend and greatest consolation.

" Be assured that my remembrance of you in prayer is more frequent than my many, many letters of former days, and that I can never forget all you have been to us, and all that you still are to her who will always remain : Your Little Child."

Writing to a friend, she begins : "' My soul doth magnify the Lord, because He hath regarded the humility of His servant.' This canticle is mine to-day, and so I come with it to you, to invite you to join with me in thanksgiving. . . . Then I recommend myself very specially to your prayers during our retreat, which will begin on the 22nd, and for the great day, for now there must be no more bargaining with grace, nor of having any reserves.

" If it asks much, we must give much. Indeed, to promise all on one's Profession day, after having received all, is an easy matter ; but I want to give to this act its full value, and face the future (that

is, what comes afterwards), and my whole religious life, which depends, it seems to me, on my fidelity in keeping the promises made at my Profession."

While thus pouring forth her joy into the hearts of her friends she was binding herself still closer to that of Jesus. On September 12 she wrote in her notebook: "I am following again in spirit my pilgrimage to Pellevoisin, and have just made an hour's adoration before the Holy Face of Jesus. Oh, how it made me understand my sins of sense, and what they have cost and still cost my Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament!

"I was much struck by this saying of Blessed Margaret Mary: 'Death to myself as regards my senses!' And what a model she was on this point! I want no longer to be half-and-half mortified, and understand now how far-reaching are the obligations of my Profession. Am I going to promise, and then return to my former life? Oh no, my God, that is impossible! Give me, I beg of you, the graces that make the saints. Oh, Jesus, I plead with You in the sacred name of Your holy Mother, and You will not refuse me, though so unworthy! Am I not alway 'Your Mercy'? I beg of You to enlighten and strengthen me,—yes, strengthen me!"

On September 20 she received a visit from her

brother-in-law, and arranged with him all her business affairs. After this, she experienced great comfort in the thought that now she was for ever freed from all temporal cares, and recorded the fact simply in her notebook: "To-day I have exchanged the goods of earth for those of Heaven: I have now only my Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Oh, Divine Spirit of Jesus in poverty, rest upon me, and keep me ever poor, even in the smallest details." At the end of these lines she sums up the last instruction she heard as a novice in the evening of that day, September 22, when she entered her eight days' retreat, in these words: "It is *there* we must die,"—alluding to a visit she had just paid to an altar of the Sacred Heart. It is a custom in the congregation to draw a place of solitude before a retreat, and it was somewhat significant that Sister Mary of Mercy drew "The Holy Sepulchre," her protectors being "The Holy Women."

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It was with the holy ambition of dying to all she had hitherto been that Sister Mary of Mercy entered her retreat. To learn something of the lights and graces she received therein we must again have recourse to the notes that have already revealed to us so many of her beautiful thoughts.

PROFESSION RETREAT

“ Mother Most Merciful, Blessed Father Eudes, Venerable Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia, Mother Mary of the Divine Heart, St. Francis, St. Clare, Holy Angel Guardians, pray for and bless me.

“ I come, my God, to do Thy will !

“ The Victim Spouse of the Word became a victim for us. I ought resolutely to enter upon the way of the perfect and of the saints. My God, make this desire a reality. Thou canst do it, and I have confidence in Thee and in Thy love for me ! . . .

“ We are God’s creatures. He has created us as He has done certain plants for hot and sunny countries, and has destined us to bask in the full light and heat of the Heart of Jesus. . . . Oh, do not transplant these flowers !

“ What strength and light I received while making the way of the Cross,—quite different from ever before, and I understood why I had drawn the Holy Sepulchre. There is my rendezvous with Jesus. There I must enter while in life, and come forth with Him wholly spiritualised, to live only by Him and in Him. . . .

“ My God, I am Thine and Thou art mine; my only good for ever ! May the Holy Women protect me,—that is, Our Blessed Lady, St. Mary

Magdalen, and all those who have followed Jesus to Calvary, who have suffered and died with Him, and who cease not to love and make Him loved. . . .

“ At the five o’clock meditation I understood, by a powerful grace of light, that those who followed Jesus to Calvary were those who had loved Him most tenderly. I ought to love much. Then Our Lady appeared to me as never before. How I understand her now in her sorrows! . . . The love of the Cross and of the Blessed Sacrament are inseparable.

“ I am to-day as a victim, whole and entire, and it brings with it deep and unspeakable sweetness. . . . I meditated on humility, but still more on the joy of being annihilated before Jesus in His annihilation. Then on love of humiliation and of contempt (and truly, my God, how smitten I am with love of self!), do Thou show me my misery, in order that humiliations and slights from others may always find me ready to accept them, and that I may have only my poverty to offer Thee, without my still having to *force* myself to think others are in the right! Oh, give me this absolute contempt for my body and my little, very little sufferings. Satan would like me to dwell on these. Give me now the grace to be

truly generous and large-hearted. A strong soul full of love ! ”

During this retreat, Sister Mary of Mercy had another talk with the Mother-General. As in the first, she spoke of her high aspirations, and received the most solid and encouraging advice.

In her notes we find the following memorandum :

“ Our Mother-General’s words this morning were exactly the same as those of our dear Mistress of Novices. . . . She recommended me never, under any consideration whatever, to cast aside later what I have been taught in the novitiate. . . . Oh, my God, preserve me from such a misfortune ! . . . I beg of Thee the grace not to be sent to any foundation where the Superior would not hold a firm hand over me. . . . And I am the living victim of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament ! Our Mother-General has told me so, my beloved Mother approves, our good Father Confessor has repeated the same for ten months ; and so, by the ineffable mystery of the love of the Sacred Heart of my Jesus, it is not only an *attrait*, a passing grace, but the Will of God ! . . . But I must always remember that I have only been cured for ‘ the glory of God and the salvation of souls.’

“ The days are passing, and now we are on the very eve of the one so long desired, so impatiently

awaited. To-morrow! It is for to-morrow, my God, that Thou hast created, loved, and preserved me! It was in view of to-morrow that I sang with tears of love in my eyes on the eve of my first Communion: 'Come, oh come, my Jesus, come my sweetest Saviour, come and reign in the centre of my heart.' "

In spite of these outbursts of fervour, the day was not without its trials, for a little later she adds: "Four o'clock. I have just been to the tomb of our Venerable Mother, on which I placed my heart, my vows, my great promise, as well as this notebook with my resolutions. . . . My Jesus has hidden Himself very well to-day, and I have been seeking for Him unceasingly; but I hear always, quite low, the words: 'I seek a victim to be immolated. . . . My daughter, do you wish to give Me your heart, where I can rest my *suffering* love?' . . . and, in order that I may not be taken by surprise afterwards, He is letting me feel it now. . . . Oh yes, my Jesus, I will love Thee for the love of Thyself alone."

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"September 30. Hæc dies quam fecit Dominus, etc. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us be glad and rejoice therein!"

The eighteen novices being ready to ascend the

altar of sacrifice, while waiting for the ceremony to commence, Sister Mary of Mercy made a final entry in her novitiate notebook :

“ 8.30. The hour for my Profession has just struck. . . . I come, my God, to consecrate and immolate myself to Thy love.”

A few minutes later, holy Mass began. It was celebrated by Mgr. Pasquier, Protonotary Apostolic, Rector of the Catholic University of Angers, and Superior of the community. The Rev. P. R—— Capuchin preached. This good Father was a devoted friend of the Kérue! family. He had known Sister Mary of Mercy in the world, had consoled and encouraged her during her sickness, and it was he who had procured for her *The Life of Sister Mary of the Divine Heart*. He had therefore a just claim to speak on this great day. He did so with the heart of a father and apostle ; but after having spoken to the community, to the young postulants, twelve in number, who were to lay aside the dress of the world, and to the novices about to pronounce their vows, he addressed himself to his dear child, recalling to her mind the graces God had bestowed on her from her childhood in preparation for this great day, and congratulating her on the realisation of her holy desires.

This naturally drew to her the attention of the

audience, which caused great suffering and was a very real cross to the poor novice, who afterwards bitterly reproached the preacher, and spoke later of the pain it caused her in almost exaggerated terms, which, however, only served to show her deep humility.

After the sermon, the clothing of the postulants took place, followed by the Profession. The impatience with which she had waited for this hour may give us some idea of the ardour with which Sister Mary of Mercy replied to the questions of the ceremonial, and the love with which she pronounced and signed the sacred formula which made her a religious of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, the spouse of our Lord, and, according to her holy ambition, "the victim of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament."

After this, she prostrated herself under the pall; and while Holy Church chanted over her the prayers and absolution, she completed her sacrifice, and multiplied her prayers for all who had asked for them. When the celebrant invited the victims of Divine Love to come forth from the shadows of death and clothe themselves "with the light of life, which is Jesus Christ, and by the help of this Divine light to walk in the ways of perfection," it was with holy joy she sang with her companions :

“ The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear ? ” and that she received the crucifix given as a pledge of the Divine alliance she had just contracted. In all truth could she say : “ Far be it from me to glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Little did she care for the crown of roses she wore on her head on this day of grace, but how dear to her was the crucifix which had been fastened on her breast close to the silver heart which the religious of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd receive on their Profession day, as a mark of their consecration to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

She was henceforward to be “ all for Jesus ” ; and as she had but lately said that it was with a view to her Profession that God had created, loved, and preserved her, she might well have added that it was in order that she might taste its sweet joys that He had cured her, for her days were now numbered, and she was in a short space of time to realise, if we may use the words of the wise director of the community, “ her great ideal, by very simple actions.”

CHAPTER X

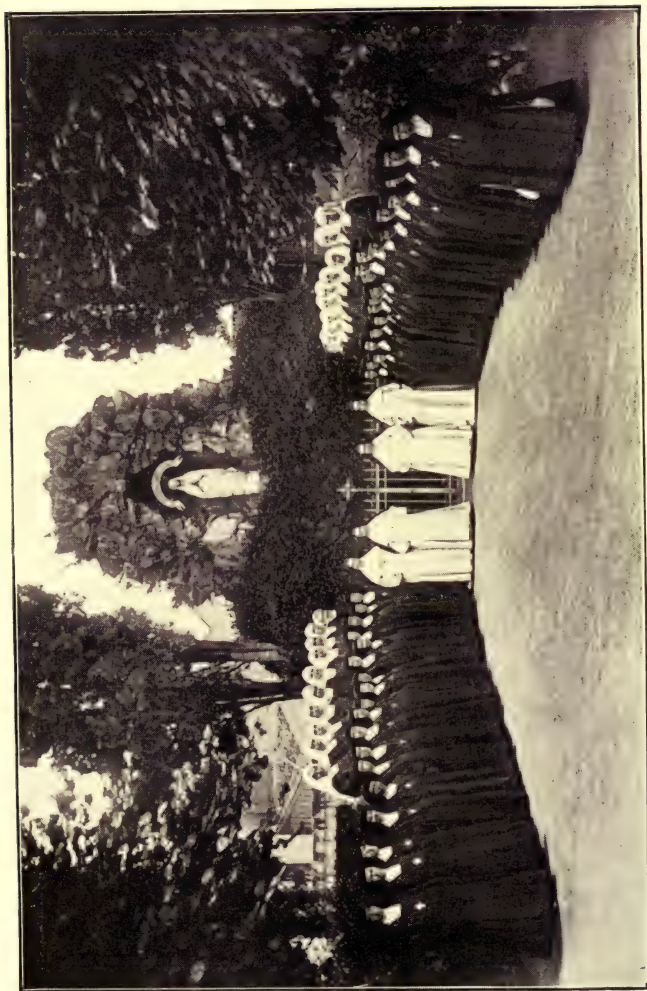
PROFESSED AND VICTIM

I

THE day following her Profession, Sister Mary of Mercy resumed her ordinary occupations, at the same time tasting the joys of interior union with God.

It is again from her notes we must draw the account of her inner life :

“ For two days Jesus has been all mine, and I am all His. How strong and powerful is this grace of union. To-day it is so sweet and intense this *attrait*—no, that word is not strong enough,—this drawing to the tabernacle which comes with the words : ‘ Can the victim dwell outside Jesus ? ’ Then as to Thursday ! How can I speak of that Mass of union,—the elevation, oblation, and Communion ? Oh, it is useless to write about it, for I can never forget it all ! Then Jesus, touched by the desire of my heart, called me up the first (alluding to her place in the choir). . . . Oh, my Jesus, can I



The Magdalens in their garden.



ever refuse Thee anything after our giving ourselves to each other so absolutely? . . . And since then every breath, every beating of my heart is one with His, and my will lost in His. . . . I will follow Him to the end of the world. . . . Angers is dearer to me than anything; but for the sake of Jesus in the tabernacle I would go to China. . . . He will take care of me. . . . What love! . . . But what suffering, too! That martyrdom of humiliation,¹ that painful blow which quite stunned me.

“ It was such a shock, I dared scarcely advance to make my vows till it dawned upon me that by this our Lord was asking me if I were ready to suffer all things for Him then, although my heart had been full to overflowing with anguish, it righted itself in a moment and the love of suffering took possession of it. . . . I felt intense joy at having something to suffer for Jesus, and profound gratitude that His love had prompted Him to seal my heart so soon with His own seal,—His Cross, His dear Cross. . . . I was truly His spouse and victim. . . . He had not deceived me, and by that unspeakable humiliation He gave me a touching proof of this. . . . This thought, then, led me to the altar, and I pronounced my vows, rendering to our Lord love for love, heart for heart.

¹ Alluding to the words addressed to her by the preacher,

. . . It was His poverty, His obedience, His purity, His love for souls . . . which pierced like an arrow the little door of His prison and united me to Him . . . for ever ! And that death under the funeral pall ! . . . Oh, my God, never permit my own will to rise again ! ”

With her Mothers, Sisters, friends, and family, Sister Mary of Mercy could not contain her expressions of happiness. “ Yesterday,” she wrote a little later, “ we said farewell to the last of the Sisters professed with us, who are leaving for foundations. Only three of us remain, and one of these will also leave us soon. Our Irish Sisters will be setting out for India, and all that,—to *save souls*. Let us, too, set to work. Our Venerable Mother said that the least work done contributed to that, and therein lies all our happiness. . . . If you were so charmed with our beautiful day on the 30th, . . . what must those have been whom it most concerned ?

“ Their happiness is the highest there can be on earth. . . . To belong to God by sacred ties that one renews at every beating of one’s heart, and, besides that, to be His in the smallest details of our work. Above all, to be labouring by every action in the fulfilment of our vow to win souls to Him ! . . . Many thanks for all your kindness and your good

prayers. . . . Help me also to pay my debt of gratitude to my beloved Mothers by praying that I may be always and in everything their true daughter."

Some days after their Profession, as stated above, the young religious had received their appointments, and been dispersed by the voice of obedience. Moreover, Heaven had claimed its share, for, on October 7, one of the happy victims of September 30 was suddenly called from this world. She, too, was a fervent soul, on whom great hopes had been founded for the works of the Institute. Her devotedness, fidelity to duty, and tact in dealing with the children amongst whom she had been employed in her second year, had gained for her general esteem, and her death was greatly regretted by the community.

Sister Mary of Mercy remained at the mother-house in the capacity of Second Mistress of the Magdalens. The terms in which she announced the fact to her sister show us with what joy she received her nomination and undertook her new duties :

" I must tell you of the great favour the Good God has just accorded me. On Monday morning our venerated Mother-General appointed me to go to the Sister Magdalens ; that is to say, she is sending me to devote myself to these dear conquests

of God's grace. . . . I always regarded that little corner as a semi-paradise, but the thought of going there one day never entered my head. You may guess my happiness. . . . We observe silence all day : I work and pray in their midst. . . . Ask our Lord that I may do them at least some little good."

II

If the young professed was happy to devote herself to those dear souls who are, as it were, the completion of the great work of the " Good Shepherd," they on their side gave her a warm welcome, and soon she was quite at home in her duties, of which she herself tells us in a letter written just before Advent :

" I write to you from the Magdalens' community room. How I love them, and how truly one is their mother by grace ! . . . I am only the second in command ; but their Mother Mistress gives me plenty to do, and I have charge of the novices and postulants, who number thirteen.

" You want to know what I do ? Well, I come in the morning at 8.45, and give little lessons in music and reading until 11 o'clock. Then I preside in their refectory, and after their dinner at the recreation,—one half hour in the garden, the other

inside. . . . Our good Magdalens are so fervent that we talk only on pious subjects ; and I feel quite ashamed to see myself, born as it were only yesterday, in authority over these, amongst whom are some truly beautiful souls. . . . There are eighty of them in all. . . .

“ In the afternoon they work all together, and in profound silence, only broken by the rosary, spiritual reading, and then Vespers. At 4 o'clock I go again to their workroom, as in the morning, and at 4.45 return to the community. . . . On Sundays I follow all the office in their choir. . . . The Magdalens are our Venerable Mother Foundress' crowning work, and my duty is to do them good ; but the best way of doing that is by example, and, as our good Father ¹ says : ‘ We give God to others in proportion as we ourselves possess Him.’ ”

Sister Mary of Mercy's zeal was not inactive, and the happy initiative of her piety seconded the devotedness of the First Mistress. When Advent drew near, she wrote in her usual joyous strain : “ I am preparing for to-morrow, the first Sunday in Advent, eighty billets, to be drawn by lot, giving each one an office to fulfil near the Infant Jesus. I have chosen the pretty verses of Sister Thérèse of the infant Jesus ; but as there was need of a

¹ The Abbé Saudreau.

virtue to be practised, the First Mistress told me to put whatever I liked. So I made a grand collection of them, bearing on the accomplishment of the rule and religious perfection. I laughed to myself while writing them. . . . But I, too, shall draw a ticket, and so, in consequence, be soon on my way to great heights ! . . . I am so happy when I see one of our Magdalen novices or postulants redoubling their fervour after a kind word of encouragement : one forgets all that it may have cost to say the word, when the result is to make our Lord better loved. . . . Let us never despair of souls. . . . We see such wonderful instances of Divine mercy that we feel how little we understand the Good God. . . . Since you like these details, here are some more : Last week all the community were in retreat (except myself, on account of my recent Profession), so that the First Mistress of Magdalens only passed through these quarters, in deep recollection, and I have had charge of the whole flock. This was very easy, for they multiplied their acts of silence, so that their own virtues took care of them. . . . They greatly love nice sentences : they write them out, pin them to their work-boxes, and meditate on them. . . . I have told you, have I not, that they are occupied in sewing, and really make very beautiful things ;

but they have a mistress of work, one of themselves, so I only superintend them. . . .”

As we see, Sister Mary of Mercy loved her duties, and gave herself to them whole-heartedly. She regarded them from a very supernatural standpoint, seeing in the Magdalens souls who were objects of Divine predilection, of whom Jesus was pleased to say, as of their holy Patroness : “ Many sins are forgiven them, because they have loved much ” ; and she had but one end in view, which was to urge them to correspond to His excessive mercy, by an excess of love. Thus she was faithful in giving them what she herself recognised to be the best means of helping them, *i.e.* good example on every point of religious virtue.

During her too short stay amongst them she was a constant subject of edification to the Magdalens. What struck them most in her were her love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, her ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, and, above all, that profound humility which made her utterly disregard herself or her own tastes when it was a question of giving pleasure or consolation to others. To act thus could not always be done without effort ; but she knew how to do with a smiling face what in her bright way she used to term “ *turning her back on self.* ” One day at recreation, the Magdalen

novices and postulants were talking amongst themselves about the very edifying life of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, a Carmelite, which they were then reading, and of her habit of denying herself in all things, when their young mistress remarked she thought a quicker and more simple way than self-denial was merely to turn one's back on oneself. This phrase was not forgotten, and, whenever they saw her practising self-renunciation in any way, they used to say: "Mother Mary of Mercy is turning her back on self."

The remembrance of this still exercises a strong influence over certain souls, who for the love of God are striving to attain perfect abnegation and continue to turn their backs on self, in imitation of their good Mother. Often do they follow her in spirit to her heavenly abode, and implore her help to remain faithful to the virtues with the desire of which she had inspired them. As she usually presided over the recreations of the Magdalen novices and postulants, she always liked to form them in a group around her, and entertained them by her cheerful gaiety, having a kind look and word for each one. Sometimes she would explain to them the Psalms, drawing their attention to the beautiful thoughts contained therein. She especially loved to speak to them of the *Benedicite*, in

which she delighted. Often she suggested practices which appealed to their imagination and stimulated their virtue. "Each of you," she said, "has an altar in her heart which must be prepared for the coming of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Your acts of love will be the candles, and your virtues the flowers which will adorn that altar: thus, your acts of humility will be the violets, your charity the roses, etc.; and in order that your bouquets may not fade, you must put them in the refreshing waters of the spirit of sacrifice."

She had quite a talent for instilling into these dear souls the spirit of faith and piety with which her own overflowed.

One day, when reciting the mid-day *Angelus*, and coming to the "Et Verbum caro factum est," she leaned towards one of the Magdalens, who delighted in hearing her speak of her love of Jesus, the Victim in the Blessed Sacrament, and said in a low voice: "*And the Word was made a Victim, and dwells in me.*" She said these things so simply and with such earnestness that her words carried conviction with them, so that she who related this fact said it made her see how really she lived in the presence and in the possession of her Well-beloved. . . .

III

It was thus that, quietly and unobserved save by the eye of God, Sister Mary of Mercy, in the sphere in which holy obedience had placed her, did all in her power to procure the glory of God and fulfil the end of her vocation. Her superiors rejoiced to see in her a soul so deeply penetrated with the spirit of their sublime vocation, and so thoroughly understanding its obligations. There was now no need to fear that her attraction for interior union with God and contemplation would paralyse her active life, nor her devotedness to external works withdraw her from her life of union. Sometimes in the last months of her career, seeing her working with such energy, not only in her own employment but in the little services that from time to time were required from her by the Sister Procuratrix, her mistress would say to her : " Take care, Sister Mary of Mercy, moderate your ardour, or the sword will wear out the sheath."

" It is nothing, dear Mother," she replied, smiling ; and then in a confidential tone she added these beautiful words of one of the Sisters which had been repeated to her : " Dear Mother, the body *alone* is occupied in that work."

No labour, in fact, separated her from our

Lord. Often during the day would she repeat that antiphon from her dear little *Breviary of the Sacred Heart*, which she never failed to say each time she left the chapel after a community exercise :
“ I leave my heart in presence of Thy Divine Sacrament, and go to do Thy will while sacrificing to Thee my own. Oh, my King, it will remain before Thee as a burning lamp, consuming itself in Thy honour ! ”

It was thus she entered into the spirit of the Venerable Mother Pelletier, fully justifying those words of the servant of God to her daughters :
“ It is only by devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the interior life that we can fulfil the vows we have made. . . .

“ The more a religious is animated by the spirit of her vocation the more she will love prayer and meditation. There she will find the strength necessary to labour efficaciously in the work of bringing back souls to God.”

When recalling now the joyousness with which this young Sister devoted herself to all the duties of her double vocation as a religious, and a religious of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, we are inclined to wonder if she had not, even then, a presentiment that her life would be short, and was consequently interiorly urged not to spare herself,

in order to "fulfil a long time in a short space." The following passage from a letter written at that period allows us to think this : " I do not speak of my health," she says, " because it is good, and I am surrounded by the most motherly and delicate attentions. Oh, help me to testify to my Mothers my gratitude and happiness ! If you only knew with what joy I say to myself, when walking in the garden, ' I am a religious ! ' and when I see myself clothed exactly like Mother Mary of the Divine Heart (but it is her *heart* that is wanting in me), and feel that God is pleased to use His little servant to make Himself more loved, and that my life is consecrated to Him, my happiness is unspeakable. All that joy, even now, is not of this world ; truly, the religious life is but one long act of love, which trials of whatever kind only make deeper and stronger. Can we love Jesus otherwise than as He has loved us ? Ask then for me that I may be a true daughter of our Venerable Mother and of our present Mothers : that I may be a soul with a large heart and determined will, forgetting self for God and souls. ' Let us march on to battle, to glory.' We shall sing together, and that too, before long, the infinite mercies of the Sacred Heart."

In the month of November, Sister Mary of Mercy

prepared for the renewal of her vows, though on account of her recent retreat she did not make the community one. This epoch brought the anniversary of her offering of herself to Jesus as His victim, and the remembrance of the graces then received returned vividly to her mind. She records this fact in her notebook in moving terms: "One year has passed since that sacred moment in which I became the little living victim of Jesus. . . . A year of such joy. . . . A year of this absolute gift of myself. A year of that priceless love of my Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. A year since that word: 'Yes, I will take you and will place you in My large ciborium. . . . Sufferings are necessary' Oh, how have I corresponded with this grace which is to colour my whole life? . . . To what extent have I let myself be sacrificed? . . . What has been my recollection, my life of union? Has everything really been for Jesus, or have I sought myself by a natural and merely external devotedness?"

"On Sunday I am going to renew my vows and my consecration. I shall thus return to the source of grace and 'reconquer my Jesus.' Yes, I want to keep Him within me, and I shall arrive at that. His grace calls me to it. Then, total detachment—a life of suffering—whatever He may wish; but we

shall live united, and, according to our Mother's words, I must seek Him within my soul. I will be to Him a clear crystal through which He can shed forth His rays. According to the advice I have received, I must fly from even the shadow of a sin, or of an imperfection, and must practise heroic virtue. . . ."

At the very time Sister Mary of Mercy was writing these lines our Lord was preparing to purify her still more in order to bestow on her the supreme joy of realising here on earth the motto so dear to her: "To suffer in order to increase in love." Her soul was suddenly enveloped in darkness; but its shadows, enlightened by her faith in the love of her Divine Spouse, did not disturb her peace. She had written formerly: "My Jesus, I will love You solely for Your own sake." In this hour of trial she wrote again: "My Jesus, You dwell in beautiful souls who love You truly; I am unworthy of it, but I beg You to make them love You still more. . . . All the same, You are my only good, my All, my treasure: for You alone do I live and labour. Yes, You are mine, and I have naught but You. I am really yours, Your possession. I love all You do or wish, and it is enough for me to do Your will through love."

A little later she adds: " Jesus sees in His ' Mercy ' ¹ a very keen desire, and has given me some crumbs from His table."

IV

Sister Mary of Mercy had tasted with gratitude the joys of union ; but when our Lord was silent, she was resigned, believing herself unworthy of Divine consolations, and in no way losing faith in the love of Him whose will she desired to do at any cost. Except to those to whom she opened her soul, she never spoke of her trials, and none of the Sisters would have suspected any change in her spiritual life. If, however, this cross was painful, it was not to be of long duration. Physical suffering was shortly added to that of her soul, and soon there began what we may call the *Consummation est* of the victim.

According to her notes, the feast of Holy Innocents marked the " last good day," as she termed it, of her interior consolations, and she began the year 1910 in a state of resignation. At the end of January she caught a cold, which did not cause any anxiety at first, but which she could not entirely throw off. In spite of every care, it lingered on throughout February, and then seemed to have

¹ Referring to her name.

disappeared; when on March 7, while she was dressing before the community meditation, she was taken with a spitting of blood, which obliged her to lie down again. The Sister whose duty it was to visit the cells at this time found her in this state, and immediately apprised the Sister Infirmarian and the Mistress of Novices, who went at once to her dear child, whom she found rather alarmed by what had happened.

She herself felt very uneasy, but, not letting this appear, she tried to reassure the invalid, at the same time providing her with every care and the remedies necessary under the circumstances.

Several times during that day and the next Sister Mary of Mercy again brought up blood. The doctor who was sent for, at the very first, found the chest in a bad condition, and did not conceal his fears. She was then taken to the Infirmary, and, though the invalid was not told the doctor's opinion, she understood there was cause for anxiety, and said to a young Sister to whom she often spoke freely of her longing for Heaven: "This time it is serious: I believe that Jesus is preparing to have a little game with me"; adding joyously, "but happily, if He shivers the glass, He is sure to make it good."

Nevertheless, at that same time nature reasserted

its rights, and doubtless for her greater merit, her desire to quit this world was mingled at times with regrets at having to give up the work she had just begun ; then she experienced a great fear of the sufferings before her, and dreaded being unable to bear them with all the perfection of love that she desired. She understood, however, that these natural and involuntary feelings were but phases in her sacrifice, and continued, in spite of them, to direct her desires towards the possession of Him of whose approach she felt assured, and to whom she used to say again and again in the depths of her heart : “ My Jesus, always more suffering and more love.” It was doubtless in answer to this secret wish of His little servant that our Lord did not hear the earnest prayers offered in the community, the novitiate, and by the Magdalens to obtain her cure.

Always full of delicate thoughtfulness for those she loved, she begged that her family might not be told of her state,—at any rate, just then. Her request was acceded to the more readily, because, on account of the ordinary regulations regarding letter-writing in Lent, her sister would not be expecting to hear from her at that time, and so her silence would cause no uneasiness.

In spite of his first fears, the doctor did not despair

of her restoration to health, and advised her being sent to Saint Nicholas, which belongs to the mother-house, the air of which is exceptionally salubrious and beneficial to the sick. In his *Life of Venerable Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia Pelletier*, Mgr. Pasquier speaks of Saint Nicholas as an immense building of the eighteenth century, erected by the Benedictines in such perfect taste that when the servant of God acquired its possession, in 1854, it was perhaps the most beautiful monument in the city of Angers. It is situated to the west of the town, and its position, writes Mgr. Pasquier, is charming. The building is very large, and is placed on a hill, at the base of which lies a deep sheet of water, fringed with wild uncultivated growth, pine trees, etc., and seeming remote from all civilisation. On the north it overlooks wide meadows sloping to the Maine, and beyond them its horizon is bounded by the vineyards of the left bank of the Loire.

However, as the season was not yet sufficiently advanced for much sitting out of doors, and as the change would have necessitated removing the cherished invalid from her present surroundings, endeared to her by the many and great graces she had received therein, and from the constant intercourse with those she loved so affectionately, her



The ancient Abbey of St. Nicholas.

Superiors, Mistress of Novices, and companions, whose frequent visits gave her so much consolation, it was thought better, with the doctor's assent, to defer her removal for a short time, to Sister Mary of Mercy's great relief, although, in her desire to will only what God willed, she was quite ready to make these sacrifices, should obedience require them of her.

The malady seemed to have become stationary, and there was no change in her outward appearance, nor in her appetite, which remained good. She would rise in the morning, and after her devotions in church would walk in the garden, etc., and did not usually retire to rest till about six or seven in the evening. Nevertheless, without showing in any way exteriorly, the disease was secretly doing its work. Easter fell this year on March 27, and, in order that her family might not be alarmed at her silence, she wrote a letter to her sister, brother-in-law, and aunt, on the following Tuesday, beginning :

“ Let us rejoice in the Lord, Alleluia !

“ MY DEAR ONES,—I am writing this letter to each and all of you, not having time for more, and you might be anxious if you had no news of me. Thanks for your kind letters. I am so pleased at

the great good that is being done in the parish; but you must be the *best* of the best, in order that the goodness people see in you may make religion loved. . . .

“Almost all of us, myself included, have had the influenza,—a regular epidemic. During the winter we lost several of our children, and, amongst others, three old Magdalens. But now that Lent is over, and the sun is re-appearing, everyone is beginning to look themselves again. . . .

“So your Apostle John is already looking full of mischief. I had imagined him as quiet as a lamb! Well, you are good souls, and dearly do I love you. . . . We have had, as usual, our beautiful celebrations during Holy Week and Easter.

“Aunt speaks of coming to see me, with little John, at which I rejoice; but do not let it be before the warm weather comes. It is still so cold, and measles are raging throughout the country! . . .

“Let us pray—yes, let us pray earnestly for each other. That is the great bond that unites us, is it not, in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary?

“With a fond embrace for each one of you,
“SISTER MARY OF MERCY.”

V

Fearing to alarm her family, Sister Mary of Mercy had, as we see, scarcely alluded to her

health ; but it was not thought well to delay longer in letting them know how matters stood ; and as Mme. Kérue!l's health at that time made caution a necessity, it was her husband who was written to, the delicate task of preparing his beloved wife for the trial that was before her being entrusted to him. He was told at the same time that in a few days his sister would be taken to Saint Nicholas.

On April 10, yielding entirely to the wishes of Superiors, and concealing the keen sorrow it caused her to leave the mother-house she so loved, the novitiate where she had learnt the sacred obligations of her state, the chapel where she had pronounced her holy vows and consecrated herself as our Lord's victim, and the infirmary in which her interior life had assumed so intense a character, Sister Mary of Mercy set out for the spot which she foresaw would be the mountain of her final immolation.

Some days later she wrote to her sister :

“ God is in perpetual communion with a soul who does His will.

“ MY DEAR LITTLE CHARLOTTE,—I am writing from our large infirmary at Saint Nicholas, seated in a nice arm-chair, and all so quiet, the ticking of the clock being the only sound to be heard ! Near

me is a Sister, as good as she is devoted, who is working hard to finish her work, which is in arrears ; and another Sister, who is also sick, and who goes with me to '*la Garenne*' (the pine wood described above).

" There are six beds, all white, ranged round the room (ours is next the window) ; and at one end, opposite the door, is a very pretty altar of Our Lady

" To-day it is raining, hailing, and thundering, so it is impossible to go out ; but the last few days the weather has been beautiful, and we have been to the Garenne, which is quite close to the house. It is delicious under those beautiful fir trees ; the grass is covered with flowers, and the lilac hedges are in full blossom. As soon as the sun re-appears, we shall return and spend some hours there. *If you only knew all the kindness of our Mothers and Sisters towards me !*

" Above all, do not be anxious, but give me news of yourself and Felix, of aunt, and the dear little angel. . . .

". . . . Your kind letter has just been brought to me. Many grateful thanks, my dear little sister. I am so pleased to learn that your health is good. Thanks for your good prayers—continue them for me. I count on them, and do not forget you in mine. . . .

“ So you want me to tell you all my weaknesses. Very well! Yes, I am far from being one of those generous, valiant souls you speak of, so that all my efforts are made to bear on that side, and it is just that strength of will I want you to ask for me. You understand what it means to put aside our works and the souls I love, in order to take care of myself. . . . At the same time, I cannot but see in it all our Lord’s will, who wishes me to labour in this way for the salvation of souls. And, besides, a few weeks will soon pass. Yes, let us be united by prayer and sacrifice in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. I unite the three of you and the dear little one in my affection, and always remain your very grateful and affectionate

“ SISTER MARY OF MERCY.”

The dear invalid was not allowed to feel lonely in what she termed her exile. Many were the visits she received from the Sisters, for which she always showed great gratitude. All were welcomed with that sweet smile which those who knew her will never forget. Everyone was struck by the patience with which she bore her sufferings. “ One must suffer smilingly,” she used to say to those who were astonished at her gaiety ; and, faithful to her much-

loved motto, she was never more happy than when she thought she could purchase an increase of love by any additional sufferings. Her companions were fond of bringing her flowers, and if amongst them she espied any field daisies or white violets she always singled out these humble flowers for special notice. . . . She spoke simply and openly of her hope of soon seeing Him whom she loved so tenderly. One day she said to a Sister : " I feel full of confidence that the Good God will not leave me long in Purgatory ; I love Him so much, and long so to go to Him. . . . It would be very strange," she added smilingly, " if, when the moment arrived for me to fly to my Divine Spouse in order to be united to Him, He were to say : ' Now, my little girl, go into the cellar ; I cannot receive you until you have been a long time in Purgatory.' "

She still interested herself in the works of her Order, and especially did she remember her dear Magdalens. She offered for the sanctification of the old ones, and the perseverance of the young, a great part of her physical and moral sufferings. She loved to converse with their mistress about all that concerned their material well-being and their spiritual interests.

One day this Sister was speaking to her of a project which, if carried into effect, seemed likely

to greatly benefit these souls, so dear to both, and urged her to unite with her in prayer to obtain its success, and to ask at the same time for her cure, that she might help her in the enterprise. With the usual ardour of her enthusiastic nature for all that concerned the glory of God and the salvation of souls, Sister Mary of Mercy, who was completely at the disposal of the Divine Master when there was question of purchasing His favours, replied: "Oh yes, dear Sister, that will do them an amount of good, and, in order to obtain it, I am going to suffer and die."

These words and others of a similar nature that she let fall from time to time showed that she was under no delusion as to her state. Nevertheless, in order not to alarm her family, who, however, were kept informed on the matter by her Superiors, she tried to make them believe in the possibility of a cure, which she did not expect herself, and had ceased to desire.

Summoning up all her now fast-failing strength, she wrote to her aunt, on April 26, beginning with a quotation from the words of her Venerable Foundress:

" 'My dear daughters, I leave you, as my last testament, love for the salvation of souls.'—Venerable Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia Pelletier.

“ MY DEAR LITTLE AUNT,—It is your turn this time to have a letter, for many of yours have remained unanswered. But you know I do not forget you, and now less than ever, for I recall the time when you devoted yourself to me like a mother. I am so happy to know you are all well.

“ We have just come back after spending an hour and a half at *la Garenne*. The weather was delightful, and the air has done me a lot of good. In a few days we are to take up our abode there altogether. I count always on your good prayers and Communions. Embrace the dear little one for me. I hope he says his prayers? . . .

“ Just at this moment a Sister has brought us your good things. Many thanks for all. I can guess that your hearts are within them. Thanks. Mine is in the Heart of Jesus! It is in Him that I love you. Pray for our Mothers here as an act of gratitude for all their goodness to me. . . .”

These lines were the last written by Sister Mary of Mercy. Shortly before this she had sent a letter to her sister, of which the following is an extract : “ I shall place my heart close to yours, begging the Divine Heart of my Jesus to unite us in Himself with one same love. You are His in the world : His, with the little family of which He is King and

centre. I am His by my holy vows and the absolute gift of my entire being; but we must both of us love Him much, and make Him much loved.

“Do you sometimes meditate on those words of the Catechism, which have struck me so much: ‘God has created us to know, love, and serve Him, and by this means attain eternal life’? That, then, is the end, and the present life only the means. Oh, how we should rise above the littleness of human things if we looked beyond them to this, our true, our only end! . . .”

Sister Mary of Mercy had now been a month at Saint Nicholas, and, though there was little external change in her, it was evident that she lost strength day by day. Nevertheless, there was nothing that denoted any immediate danger. On May 7 she remained in bed for the first time, a little abscess having formed at the base of the spine, which made her feverish. She had a bad night; but on the 8th she seemed no worse than before, took her food as usual, and did not appear to be ill. Having heard in the evening of the death of an old Sister, who had been her companion when she was in the infirmary at the mother-house, she said: “That is good: she will come for me, as we arranged.”

This remark was received with a smile, as such

a thing did not seem probable. But about nine in the evening the Sister Infirmarian noticed that her breathing was more laboured than usual, and felt uneasy on leaving her. She was soon recalled, and remained till the end with the dear invalid, whose sufferings increased rapidly; so much so, that towards 1 a.m. she seemed to be in her agony. The chaplain was sent for, while a Sister went to the mother-house to call the Mother-General and the Mistress of Novices. When they arrived at Saint Nicholas she had already received Holy Viaticum. It was with transports of love and gratitude that she received this last visit of her God, and pronounced her perpetual vows, immediately after which she was anointed, the Reverend Chaplain reciting the prayers for the agonising.

It cost her nothing to renew the sacrifice of her life. "I do it," she said, "with my whole heart, for the greater glory of God, for the congregation, the preservation of the mother-house, for my family, the penitents, and the conversion of all sinners. . . . Tell my relations that they must become saints, and make their children thorough Christians, bringing them up for the Good God. . . . I think also of those who are not practising their religious duties, and beg the Good God to bring them back to Himself."

A little later she mentioned by name all those who loved her so dearly, and whom she herself loved so sincerely in God. Each of the members of her family at Saint Nazaire, her good aunts at Havre, the venerable M. D——, whom she regarded as a father, and the faithful friend who had taken her to Pellevoisin and later accompanied her to Angers. To all she sent a farewell message, and appointed Heaven as their place of rendezvous.

From that moment her desire for Heaven broke forth in unceasing, loving aspirations to her Well-beloved Spouse : “ Come, O Jesus, come ! ” Then, turning to her Mothers, “ *I am* going, am I not ? When will Jesus come ? To think of loving Him so much, and being unable to see Him ? ” Her only fear was lest she should not die. “ Am I not yet in my agony ? ” she asked ; and when answered in the affirmative, she smiled, and even trembled with joy. Her sufferings were unspeakable. Those around her had never seen so long and so painful an agony. Jesus was, indeed, immolating His victim. Those praying by her bedside united with her in imploring that the ties which bound her to earth might be broken.

The Reverend Chaplain, who had left her in order to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, returned during the morning, and encouraged her to suffer

by the thought of the happiness that was awaiting her. "Courage, my child," he said. "A few moments more, and the little 'victim' will go to be placed and established for ever in its great Monstrance."

She was soaked in profuse perspiration, and from moment to moment one could see the ravages the disease was making in her, accomplishing in that one morning what in an ordinary case it would have taken months to effect. Our Lord doubtless wished to complete the purification of His spouse before she left this world, in order at once to admit her to the celestial banquet when her ties were broken; but, also, those who knew the secrets of her soul thought that the Divine Master was fulfilling the desires of her heart, and that she was truly, and at that time above all, the living victim of Jesus,—the Victim of the Blessed Sacrament.

The whole morning passed in these transports of love and cruel sufferings. The doctor came again about 9 a.m., and tried to ameliorate her condition by an injection of camphorated oil. A few minutes later, finding herself a little better, she was quite distressed, and said: "What a misfortune! He has come to bring me back to life. . . ." The entire community came, a certain number at a time, to

seek edification in the death of so perfect a religious Sister Mary of Mercy received all these visitors with her usual amiability, having a word and a smile for each. Seeing there the Sister organist, whose tastes and talent she shared, she made a movement with her hands as though running up and down the keys of the organ, and then, pointing heavenwards, said : " We are going, dear Sister, to make music up there ! "

When the Mistress of Magdalens recommended to her a soul to which she had been most devoted, she replied, " Yes, I shall not forget her ; but I am convinced it is she who is preventing my dying." Several times during her agony she said to the Mistress of Novices : " You will console my sister, will you not ? Poor Charlotte, she loves me so." The last time she added, while kissing a picture of the Sacred Heart she had on the bed : " Will you send her that picture, and tell her it bears with it my last kiss."

About 11 a.m. most of the Sisters had to leave, and there only remained the Mother-General, the Mistress of Novices, and the Sister Infirmarian. The dear patient, who was conscious throughout, kept praying for the hour of her deliverance. " Dear Mother," she said to her Superior, " I beg of you to order me to die." " My dear child,"

she answered humbly and tenderly, "God alone is the Master of life and death; I have no right to command you to cease to live. Abandon yourself, therefore, to the Divine Goodness, and wait patiently until it pleases Jesus to call you to Himself." "Yes," she replied, "just when He wills." But almost immediately, noticing that her breathing was becoming weaker, the Mother-General said: "Courage, dear child, the moment is at hand. Jesus is about to come." With a last smile, Sister Mary of Mercy said: "He is coming!" . . . then "Adieu, my Mother"; and, joining her hands, with a look of deep recollection she turned a little to the left, bent her head, and breathed forth three faint sighs, followed by a fourth, still more feeble, which carried her beautiful soul to the Heart of Him whom she had loved so much. The little victim of the Blessed Sacrament had found its place in the Heart of Him whose life as a Victim in the Sacred Host she had striven so lovingly to imitate. . . . It was twenty minutes past eleven. For her had been realised to the letter what she had written of death: of death as she desired it, and of which she had had a foresight in her retreat of 1908, when she had written: "Death is union. To die is to lean one's head on the Heart of Jesus; it is to be carried to Him by the

angels, to see Him for the first time, and to possess our Well-Beloved for ever."

On hearing of her death, the Rev. Father Lemius wrote to the friend who had communicated to him the news: "Thanks for telling me about our dear little saint, who must have gone to the Good Shepherd simply to be clothed in the white robe of the victim (*Hostie*), and to be immolated to the Sacred Heart before entering into communion with God in glory.

"That sums up her splendid vocation, and you know with what absolute generosity she corresponded to it. In Heaven she will protect her family and friends. You were more than a friend,—*you were part of her!* She will help you in your apostolate."

Some days later he wrote in the same strain to the Superior-General:

"DEAR REV. MOTHER,—I could have wished to be able to write to you sooner. A Mother cannot lose such a child without sore grief at heart. But, as you saw, she was ripe for Heaven. At my last visit I feared I should never see her again on earth, but had a strong impression that your monastery would soon have another protecting angel in Heaven. She will pray for you in particular, dear Mother, who received her, and gave her the sole

joy she ambitioned on earth, and assisted her so maternally in her last moments.

“ Dear Sister Mary of Mercy was a pure white little victim (*Hostie*), wholly consecrated to God. . . . You have assisted at her sacrifice and entire consecration of herself, and our Lord consumed her by His love. May she obtain for you the grace to follow her, some day, and may she pray for her dear, her very dear congregation.”

Finally, the good father wrote, a little later, to Mme. Kéruef, more fully and even more appreciatively of the virtues of her regretted sister :

“ Your dear Juliette will remain in my mind as one of the most generous souls I have known. Ardent by temperament, she turned all her fire towards the Heart of Jesus, and the word which best characterises her is that of a victim, offered, consecrated, and consumed. At the close of a retreat I had developed these three thoughts, and I shall never forget the conversation I had afterwards with her. She revealed to me that they summed up her life, and it was evident our Lord had accepted her as a victim, and was forming her into a resemblance to the Sacred Host on our altars. A soul white and pure, a heart of fire, a valiant spirit, she was even then worthy to go and

take her place in Heaven by the side of the Lamb that was slain. Great graces, graces of light and of strength, were accorded to that dear child. From the heights of Heaven she will watch over her dear sister, of whom she spoke with so much tenderness, and over her whole family. What an honour for it to have given such a religious to our Lord !

“ Kindly accept my best wishes for yourself and that charming baby Marie, who has come to join little John. May they later learn that their aunt was a saint.

“ I am sending you a letter written by the Abbé Saudreau, who is regarded as one of the best spiritual directors in France. . . . His words are worth their weight in gold. What a panegyric of your dear sister ! I send it to you as a proof of my affection for the dear deceased and for you.”

In this letter, Canon Saudreau, the head chaplain of the Good Shepherd, Angers, wrote as follows :

“ VERY DEAR AND REV. FATHER,—That good, that exceedingly good and holy Mary of Mercy Kéruel, in whom you were so much interested, has just taken her flight to Heaven. She died on Monday, May 9. . . . During her agony she asked me to tell you she would not forget you when there. . . . Her death was as edifying as her life had been, and

all the community were much impressed by it. . . . Since her Profession she had been Second Mistress to the Magdalens, and in that post rendered invaluable help to the First Mistress, seconding her admirably, and greatly edifying the Sister Magdalens, who held her in much veneration. . . .

“ During the night between May 8 and 9, at two o’clock in the morning, I was sent for, the state of the dear invalid, whom I had seen the evening before, having become much worse. I brought her the Holy Viaticum, and gave her extreme unction. . . . She sighed only for Heaven, and one could not give her a greater pleasure than to speak of her approaching death. . . . Moreover, during the whole of her novitiate, she had longed to die. ‘ I asked the Good God,’ she said, ‘ that I might die a religious. I have been heard; and as I am now a nun, my only desire is to see and go to Him.’ The Sister Magdalens began to invoke her immediately after her death, and believe that they have obtained graces through her intercession.”

Besides these precious testimonials to the virtue of Sister Mary of Mercy, we have that of all those who knew her either in the world or in the cloister. Her short sojourn in the congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd is regarded there

as a special blessing from Heaven. Her Mothers and Sisters follow her with their regrets, but thank the Divine Heart of Jesus for having given her to the Order.

Emulator of those other young souls who in recent years have perfumed the sacred cloisters of religion by the fragrance of their virtues and the incense of their prayers, she is associated with them in the glory which has become their portion. It is from thence, according to her promise, she will labour still for the extension of the reign of the Heart of Jesus on earth, and protect the dear Institute to which she gave herself so fully and so generously. She will also be mindful of all those who knew and loved her on earth.

This thought is our hope and our consolation.

THE END.

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